

jeevadhara

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Judicial Activism

Edited by

Felix Wilfred

Jeevadhara

Kottayam - 686 041

Kerala, India

Tel. (91) (481) 597430

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Christ in Asia

Edited by

Sebastian Painadath

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Primacy of the Local

Edited by
Kuncheria Pathil

Jeevadhara
Kottayam - 686 041
Kerala, India
Tele. (91) (481) 597430

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Towards a More Fruitful Inter-Religious Dialogue

Edited by

John B. Chethimattam

Jeevadhara

Kottayam - 686 041

Kerala, India

Tele. (91) (481) 597430

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A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Culture and Ethics

Edited by

Thomas Srampickal

Jeevadhara

Kottayam - 686 041

Kerala, India

Tel. (91) (481) 597430

Vol. XXVIII No. 168

November 1998

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Editorial

*"There is one supreme quality every judge must have —
the capacity to weep at the sight of human suffering."*

Justice Krishna Iyer

Judiciary is one of the pillars that sustains democracy. And democracy, if it is not to remain a mere institutional reality, would require the activation of civil society and public sphere. So too, judiciary, would remain a formal juridical entity, unless it is activated to deliver social justice in interaction with the civil society. Fortunately, since the 1970's judicial activism has been growing in strength, and has made a significant contribution to the realization of the ideal of social justice, thanks also to the overall grassroots activism that was germinating and expanding in the same period. Nobody could ever forget certain landmark judgements delivered by the Supreme Court of India in the last two decades which has awakened the public consciousness.

Through judicial activism the right to life has been made more meaningful, which implies also a new method of interpretation of law, liberated from the colonial and feudal systems of justice. Public interest litigation has challenged the state to be accountable to the people, and has admonished it about its responsibility to provide better living conditions. Thanks to public interest litigation, many issues relating to environment, exploitation of child-labour, the treatment of undertrials, discrimination against and harassment of women etc., have been taken to the court demanding justice. Most important of all; judicial activism is playing a very significant educative role among the people.

Judiciary is certainly an important means in bringing justice to the suffering, the victimized, the underprivileged. However, it can be effective only when it is part of a larger movement in which people are involved and cooperate actively. Moreover, we need judges of moral integrity and of humane quality who could "weep at the sight of human suffering" and who are outraged and

indignant in the face of callous injustice inflicted on the poor and the powerless. This number of *Jeevadhara* wants to reflect on this important issue of judicial activism. It contains an opening article on the concept of judicial activism, its dynamics, areas of operation, limits etc., followed by a very enlightening interview with Justice Krishna Iyer. We understand judicial activism when we relate it to some concrete areas. Therefore, by way of example, the plight of children and prisoners is studied in relation to the legal provisions meant to protect their dignity and basic human rights. Another article studies the system and dynamics of the judicial process among the Israelites of the Old Testament, in which particular attention was paid to redress the injury done to the last and the least. The concluding article tries to place judicial activism within the changed scenario of today wherein we witness new avatars of injustice.

I wish to thank Prof. N. Manohar, my colleague in the Madras University and a well-known expert in constitutional and international law, for the many hours of fruitful discussion we had together in planning this number of *Jeevadhara*. My special thanks to Justice Krishna Iyer for graciously giving an exclusive interview, and to the advocate Fr. Xavier Arul Raj of Chennai High Court for conducting the interview. My thanks go as well to the other writers, Ms Sudha Ramalingam, research scholar Mariadoss and to Fr. Susaimanickam for their valuable contributions.

This number is an invitation to all women and men of good will to engage themselves to make the burden of the poor light and their hope alive by bringing justice closer to their lives through judicial means.

School of Philosophy and
Religious Thought
University of Madras

Felix Wilfred

Judicial Activism : Hope of the Underprivileged

N. Manohar

Professor N. Manohar, an expert on international and constitutional law, gives us an overview of the issues involved in judicial activism. He shows how judicial review is the watchdog of social justice in a written Constitution. So that justice is done to the victims, judges are bound to go beyond the letter of the law and should have the spirit and objective of the Constitution before their eyes. Where executive inaction and failure to abide by rule of law loom large, it is imperative on the part of judiciary to be naturally active. However it has its limits of wisdom and self-restraint. Our Supreme Court has been quite successful in carrying out this task.

Judiciary is one of the institutions on which rests the edifice of democracy and the rule of law. Every organ under the constitution functions in its specific sphere and is limited by the judiciary only. Independence of judiciary in modern times is guaranteed in various ways and by different means. Particularly in all the written constitutions the independence of judiciary is spoken of one way or the other. The doctrine of rule of law will be meaningful and effective only if the judiciary is alive to its objective. To ward off abuses and misuses or to restrain the state from entering into lawlessness the judiciary is endowed with independence. It is imperative that the governmental and other institutions respect and observe the independence of the judiciary.

Characteristics of the Indian Constitution

Traditional function of any judiciary under a written constitution based on rule of law was simply to function as an independent arbiter. The concept of judicial activism was originally found in the US Supreme Court. It is a conscious exercise by

the judges of the power of judicial review to meet the changing needs. In the process, a judge normally functions in a tactful way to evolve the law to meet the changing needs of the times.

Indian constitution envisages a strong independent judiciary for the nation as a whole. Incorporation of the fundamental rights and citizen's fundamental right to go to Supreme Court, Art. 32, are all indices of the human value attached to the attainment of dignity of the individual prescribed in the preamble to the constitution.

Indian judiciary passed phase after phase of crises, with restraint and activism. Indian Supreme Court rose to unparalleled heights, when it laid down the rule that no constitutional amendment is permissible if it violates the basic structure or framework of the constitution. Within a short time thereafter Indian Supreme Court introduced innovations enhancing the province of fundamental rights to new realities. The Supreme Court in a landmark judgement demolished the locus standi principle and permitted litigants to be any public spirited person to come before the court. Thus, to the underprivileged, handicapped, it gave access to the Supreme Court. However, it is absolutely true that the court cannot take care of all the problems of the poor. The ultimate state remains in self-assertion. The poor and weaker sections must therefore be organised and made self-reliant.

New dimension to Indian Judiciary

In 1950s the court adopted economic activism and insisted on political process entering into alliance with it. It paved the way for social change. In the Maneka Gandhi's case¹ the court through its judicial creativity introduced procedural fairness and breathed life into article 21 (Right to life and personal liberty). Public interest litigation and judicial activism has a complementary role to play in enhancing the standard of citizen's life. In most situations the social action litigations are but common group-interests.

Justice Bagawati laid down a proposition in the judges' transfer² case²: "... whenever there is a public wrong or public injury caused by an act or omission of the State or the public

1. (All India Reporter, hereinafter AIR) AIR 1978 SC 597.

2. AIR 1982 SC 149.

authority, which is contrary to the constitution or the law, any member of the public acting bonafide and having sufficient interest can maintain an action for redressal of such public wrong or public injury". As early as 1893, Justice Mehamood of Allahabad High Court in his dissent, in a case of an under trial, who had no means to engage a lawyer, said that the pre-condition of the case being heard, would be fulfilled only when someone speaks. He treated law as an organic component.³

The Result of Judicial Activism

In recent times, the result of judicial activism by the Indian courts brought in new dimensions to Indian jurisprudence. In *Sunil Batra Vs. Delhi Administration*,⁴ an important question arose as to whether solitary confinement imposed upon prisoners who were under sentence of death was violative of Articles 14, 19, 20 and 21 of the constitution. Two convicts in Tihar Jail filed two petitions challenging the Prison's Act. Death sentence was subject to confirmation by the High Court and thereafter the Supreme Court. The petitioner complained that from the date of death sentence he was kept in solitary confinement till the Supreme Court intervened. In another instance, Charles Shobraj, a foreigner and an under trial prisoner, challenged against putting him into fetters. The Supreme Court was categorical in saying that "It is no more open to debate that convicts are not wholly denuded of their fundamental rights. No iron curtain can be drawn between the prisoner and the constitution. Prisoners are entitled to all constitutional rights, unless their liberty has been constitutionally curtailed. However, a prisoner's liberty is in the very nature of things circumscribed by the very fact of his confinement. His interest in the limited liberty left to him is then all the more substantial. Conviction for a crime does not reduce the person into a non-person whose rights are subject to the whim of the prison administration, and imposition of any major punishments within the prison system is conditional upon the observance of procedural safeguards".⁵ The Court hence held that Solitary confinement in this case curtailed and was violative of Article 21. In a series of cases namely, *Hussainara Khatoon (1)*, *(2)*, *(3)* where

3. *India Today*, 15-3-96, page 122.

4. AIR 1978 SC 1675, AIR 1980 SC 1579.

5. AIR 1978 SC 1675 AT 1727.

the under trial prisoners were waiting for their trials, the Supreme Court reiterated that speedy trial is fundamental, implicit in the guarantee of right to life and liberty.

In *Asiad* case, the Supreme Court while entertaining a petition from a public spirited organisation on behalf of labourers belonging to socially and economically weaker sections employed in construction work in Asian Games 1982, which complained of various labour law violations, including non-payment of minimum wages, granted relief.⁶ In *Nakara Vs. Union*, a registered society of public spirited citizens which sought to espouse the cause of old and retired infirm prisoners unable to redress through tardy, expensive judicial process, was allowed to approach the court. In the bonded labourers case the Supreme Court released the bonded labourers working in stone quarries and directed the State Govts. to rehabilitate them.⁷

Law and Development for the People

When the executive and enforcement machinery sat upon rituals of legal process, the judiciary went ahead to direct the authorities to ensure curative, preventive and punitive measures to control and curb the evil of ragging in educational institutions.⁸ The insecure life of pavement dwellers were looked upon with humanitarian concern.⁹

Judicial activism energised through social action litigation has brought social consciousness about governmental irresponsibilities. Such a sensitisation has resulted in judicially evolved civilisation. Many idle legislations were animated to meet the needs of the people and made to stand for its objectives. Slumbering executive machinery is caught unawares; state machinery, including judiciary, is addressed to participate in the Nation building process. The judiciary particularly the Supreme Court has risen to the occasion through judicial activism. The Supreme Court while deciding the *Carbide Corp. case*,¹⁰ laid down the rule that once an industry is engaged in hazardous or inherently dangerous activity such an activity shall indemnify all those who

6. (1982) 3 SCC 235.

7. *Bandhua Mukti Morcha Vs. Union* AIR 1984 SC 802.

8. AIR 1985 SC 910.

9. *Olga Tellis Vs. Bombay Municipal Corp.* AIR 1980 SC 180.

10. AIR 1992 SC 218.

suffer on account of the hazardous activity regardless of the care taken element.

In respect of air pollution, Kerala High Court issued necessary directions to NEERI and State Pollution Control Board to monitor and prevent the emission of industrial gases and check open sewage canal, since the municipal corpn. and the state govt. failed to do so.¹¹ In *M. C. Mehtha Vs. Union*,¹² certain plants of large industrial undertaking manufacturing and processing hazardous and lethal chemicals and gases posing danger to health and life of workmen and people living in neighbourhood were made accountable. A tannery plant which cannot afford to set up a primary effluent treatment plant cannot be permitted to be in operation for its adverse effect on the public at large, and it will outweigh any inconvenience. Peoples' concern has been given sanctity by this case.¹³ Where ailments to persons were caused due to the distilleries' effluents, a scheme was framed by the High Court on the basis of an expert committee.¹⁴

In a categorical decision in *M. C. Mehta v. Union and Chhtriya Pardushan Mukti Sangharsh Samithi Vs. State*¹⁵ the Supreme Court said whenever applications for licenses to establish new industries are made in future, such applications should be refused unless adequate provision has been made for the treatment of trade effluents out of the factories.

All these decisions could be arrived at, thanks to the public interest litigations filed by the public spirited persons with selfless involvement.

Chemical industries though they participate in the development process require strict monitoring of their waste. Pollution is caused by sludge created by the chemical industry. The Central Govt. has ample power to give directions to remove sludge for undertaking remedial measures.¹⁶ In a recent case,¹⁷ The Supreme Court of India directed the closure of 168 industries from operating in Delhi and ordered them to be located elsewhere with the assistance of National Capital Region Planning Board. Besides,

11. 1996 Kerala 8.

12. AIR 1987 SC 965.

14. AIR 1992 Patna 80

15. 1988 1 SCC 471 & AIR 1990 SC 2060.

16. AIR 1996 SC 1446.

13. AIR 1988 SC 1037.

17. AIR 1996 SC 2231.

the Supreme Court issued necessary directions ensuring the rights of the workmen of these industries. It ordered the pollution control board to issue non-compliant industries with notices to relocate themselves elsewhere. When the coastal regulation zone Notification reducing the construction area to 50 meters was issued it was quashed by the Court as violative of the Notification.¹⁸ The menace created by the aqua farms in the country created great concern for the environmentalists. The damage it has caused on the coastal cultivation, fresh water resources, fisheries, soil erosion, mangrove eco-system is enormous. The Supreme Court ordered the closure of aqua farms. In a PIL case filed by Jagannathan, the Supreme Court issued directions to all the coastal State and Union Territory Governments to send individual notices to all the aqua farms situated in their respective territory to avail opportunity of hearing.¹⁹ In a categorical decision the Supreme Court said whenever applications for the licence to establish new industries are made in future such applications should be refused unless adequate provision has been made for the treatment of trade effluents out of the factories.

The Birth of Environmental Jurisprudence

All these decisions originating from the public interest litigation by the public spirited persons adorned the Supreme Court and the High Courts concerned with a sense of creativity, and pushed the executive to act. This process has resulted in the present mood of judicial activism of the Supreme Court; hence the birth of new environmental jurisprudence.

Sovereign authority of the State, even when a wrong was done, remained unquestionable until a new regime of compensatory jurisprudence was established in the case of *Rudal Sah* on the State liability to pay compensation to the victims of State violations.²⁰ In a number of cases where uninformed men committed gross violations of person and caused injury, the court accorded serious attention to it and dealt with the officers very sternly. Judicial activism has gone to such an extent that in a writ petition under Article 32 the Supreme Court can, apart from giving remedy,

18. 1996 (4) JT 263.

19. 1995 (5) SCALE 208.

20. AIR 1983 SC 1086 See also *Sebastian Vs. Union* (AIR 1984 SC 1076 & *Bhim Singh Vs. State of J & K* AIR 1980 SC 494).

also fashion new strategies such as preventive measures and award of compensation.²¹

In a different situation, lethargy, inefficiency and failure of the police and other authorities to protect the properties of the riot victims were gravely apprehended by the Courts. When the case came before Madras High Court, it held that having failed to protect the constitutional and legal rights of the victims, the State is liable to pay compensation. The High Court quoted various Supreme Court decisions giving wider amplitude to the right to life under Article 21.²² Scholars examined the riot cases and while studying the duties of the State for compensation, they cautioned the Court to evolve substantive standard and limitations to this field of activism.²³

No doubt, lawyers have been catalysts of innovative judicial interpretations, for transmitting new ideas and getting them accepted by the Courts.²⁴ The innovations have prompted the courts even to look beyond the territory of India and apply International instruments. As for the present state of Indian law, treaties and conventions are not directly enforceable in municipal courts. However, our courts particularly the Supreme Court and High Courts, applied directly the provisions of several human rights instruments and conventions.

The Supreme Court in several cases categorically declared the rights of citizens: the right to go abroad as a fundamental right, rights of under trials for speedy trials, right against hand-cuffing of under trials whilst on their way to and from the prison to the court, right to protection against cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Anything against these is violative of Article 21.²⁵ Further, employment of children was prohibited in every type of construction work,²⁶ in cases of malpractices and trafficking of children in connection with adoption of Indian children by

21. AIR 1987, SC 1086, 1098 - 91.

22. R. Gandhi Vs. Union AIR 1989 MAD 205. The Sikh minority were attacked and their properties, worship places, shops were destroyed when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated by a Sikh body guard. The riot took place in Coimbatore.

23. P. Leelakrishnan, compensation for Governmental lawlessness 1992 CULR p. 75.

24. Fali S. Nariman, "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Role of Lawyers", 55 The Review I/CJ. 1995, 145 at 143.

25. 1981 (1) SCC 608.

26. AIR 1982 SC 1473.

foreigners living abroad guiding principles have been laid down although there was no legislation at all²⁷; cases were also taken up regarding under trials kept in prisons in leg-irons and made to work outside jails as forced labourers²⁸; so too cases of keeping one in prison for inability to pay debts — a contractual obligation.²⁹ In all these cases the Supreme Court invariably applied provisions of human rights covenants or ILO norms, or other international conventions appropriate to each instance.

The expanded meaning of Article 21 has been provided by the court to the extent that it included pollution free air and water read with Article 48 A and 51 (G). It said that these rights must be integrated and illumined by the evolving international standards. Applying provisions of International Labour Conference, 1986, (Asbestos Convention) the Supreme Court said, right to health of workers engaged in mines and Asbestos industries is a fundamental right under Article 21 read with 39(e), 41, 43, 48 of the Constitution.

In 1985, the Supreme Court in a landmark judgement³⁰ directed a Muslim husband to pay maintenance to his divorced wife and children and the court relied upon Section 125 of Criminal Procedure Code over the Islamic traditions and Shariat law which have prescribed maintenance to the separated wife on talak for three lunar months only. The whole issue was considered against Islamic personal law and Muslims agitated for non-interference by the courts in their personal law matters. The Congress Govt. by a legislation nullified the judgement. Thereafter in another judgement³¹ the Court regretted the non-availability for Christians, of judicial separation on mutual consent or irretrievable break down of marriage. It is a case where judicial separation was claimed by a Khasi (presbyterian) wife from the Sikh husband married under christian marriage act. Both these judgements expressed the desire for a uniform civil code although no formal step was taken in this regard. Finally in *Sarala Mudgal*³² Vs. Union, the Supreme Court, while refusing to declare the first marriage of a Hindu as dissolved by his conversion to Islam to take a second wife, categorically stated that it will not be a party to such an act. The Supreme Court in its judgement of far reaching

27. 1984 (2) 244: 251, AIR 1984 SC 469.

28. AIR 1981 SC

29. 1980 (2) SCC 360-362.

30. SC Judgement on Apr. 24, 1995.

31. Judgement on May 10, 1985.

32. May 10, 1995.

consequence asked the then Prime Minister (Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao) to take a fresh look at Article 44 of the Constitution which urges the State to secure a uniform civil code for citizens throughout India. It also declared illegal the second marriage performed by a Hindu after converting to Islam.

Justice Kuldip Singh and Justice Sahai delivering the ruling said, successive governments, till date have been wholly remiss in their duty of implementing the constitutional mandate under Article 44 of the Constitution of India. Also they directed the Secretary — Law and Justice, to file an affidavit in the court fixing a date indicating the steps taken and efforts made by the Centre towards securing a uniform civil code for the citizens in terms of the Court judgement. The judgement evoked protest from many religious groups; and several scholars looked at the Supreme Court with awe and doubted whether the court can compel the Govt. to bring in legislation touching personal law in terms of the judgement. Later on the Court came out with a clarification that it has expressed its recommendation to that end, and it is not a direction to the Government.

The Supreme Court and the High Courts have done immense service to the cause of the poor, hapless and the weak to get justice under the concept of judicial activism. Public interest litigation has been a convenient tool to remedy several prevailing injustice in the society due to malfunctioning of the administration. Fortunately, the Supreme Court has judges of great social commitment whose activism was tested at the anvil of the Constitution in the process of dispensing justice.

School of Political and International Studies
University of Madras

A Bench for the Have-Nots

Towards a Third World Jurisprudence

This is an exclusive interview *Jeevadhara* had with Justice Krishna Iyer (J. K. I.) former judge of the Supreme Court and one of the foremost advocates of judicial activism and public interest litigation in the country. He was interviewed on behalf of *Jeevadhara* by Fr. Xavier Arul Raj (X. A. R.), advocate practicing in Chennai High Court. Justice Iyer explains in lucid terms the place of judicial activism in the present situation of the country and the avenues open for the have-nots to redress the injustice done to them. Among other things, he suggests the need to overcome the colonial hangovers in judicial practice and move towards a Third World jurisprudence.

X. A. R. : What would be the meaning of Judicial Activism?

J. K. I. : You cannot speak about Judicial Activism without reference to the other two branches of the State. That is the Legislature and the Executive. Activism is desirable everywhere. According to the dictionary, "Activism", merely means 'Invigorated activity'. So, unless an executive that rules the country, is vigorous in activity, the people will suffer. Inaction means indifference. Indifference means people's welfare shall not be promoted.

I have been in the executive as a Minister and I have placed, if you can call it, lots of 'activism' as a minister-executive, in the field of law, lease, electricity, social affairs, etc. I have made reforms as minister. You may call it 'ministerial activism'.

Likewise, 'Legislative Activism' is very important. When I was an M. L. A. in Madras, I had piloted a private Members Bill in favour of the tenants. It got passed by the Madras Legislature. Another one which I introduced is called a 'Malabar Agrarian Reforms Bill', which could not be passed, because in the meanwhile, Kerala State was formed. So there is nothing obnoxious about 'Activism'. Activism is desirable and necessary. Similarly, of judicial front you require 'Judicial Activism'.

X. A. R. : Can you underline the basis of Judicial Activism?

J. K. I. : Each instrumentality is good, if it is active. But its goal must be for the people, obviously under the constitution under which they exercise power. Constitution is value loaded. It has certain values and those values must be promoted by the Executive and the Legislature. That is what we mean by 'Benign Activism'. That is what we want. What happens today is 'malignant activism'. That is corruption. They, the Executives and the Legislature swindle resources meant for the people and help themselves. Most of the members of the Parliament and Legislatures reflect total indifference and apathy. They only think of increasing their salaries, getting more benefits, privileges, patronages, 10 telephones they get installed or 1 Crore Rupee for their constituency, the largesse they can distribute in their Constituency. These are not really activism. But 'anti-people activism' and they are aimed at personal aggrandizement.

In this context, people in the country fight and most of them are illiterate, bonded labourers, rural labourers, artisans, underprivileged and so in their social milieu the people become desperate. Their rights are not enforceable for the obvious reason that there is nobody to help them. The executives and the ministers do not even reach that section. And in that situation, the Constitution tells the people "They have rights". Part III says, "they have rights"; Part IV speaks of "specific rights", although they are not judicially enforceable. Part IV-A again speaks of the 'duties of the states' towards the people. People are told that clean air and water against pollution are to be protected by the States, and number of other duties are laid down for the States. People are told that their rights are in the Constitution. But how to execute them? People in power are looting and no power is available to the common people. Therefore access to social justice has become the major cry of the people of the Country.

X. A. R. : Can we say that the lethargy of the Executive and Legislature has resulted in the public interest litigations?

J. K. I. : People finding for themselves that the two instrumentalities, the Executive and the Legislature have failed, necessarily go to court, the third wing. Judges have taken oath under the Constitution that they would uphold the laws and principles of the Constitution. So they have to act on that.

Sometimes people are unable to go to the courts even. Therefore the courts have to create this new concept called 'public interest litigations'. Any good samaritan, neighbours, NGO's or anyone interested in the society can do it. No question of *locus standi*. Even an informal letter to that effect is sufficient. We have to liberate the judicial process from all ritualistic complexities. As a consequence, the NGO's started coming to the courts. They said industries are polluting, people are suffering; they brought up the issues of bonded labourers, industrial disasters and victims. All these are brought up and people are getting what they are entitled to. Politicians are smothering the investigations by the executives into scandals. The courts say that they will not allow it and are taking up investigation to itself. They want to invigilate. That is how we find the Hawala litigations, scam litigations, Fodder litigations. I will not say, these are all sufficient; but to the extent to which they are done, it is good. That is what really means by Judicial Activism.

X. A. R. : That means Judicial Activism is always positive in nature?

J. K. I. : Judicial Activism can also be negative. That is, the court being in favour of the status quo. That is just a court order. That is how in earlier days, the Supreme Court struck down Agrarian reforms. Admittedly when the privy purse of the Princes were abolished, the courts had sympathy to Princes and not for the people, and struck it down. Bank nationalisation meant to benefit common man was struck down. So in various ways, the courts gave up the benefits of the people and were doing good to the princes of the glorious past. It was a proprietorial court rather than a proletariat court or judiciary. From there we have the big sweep in the 70's and that is where we come to public interest litigations; locus standi explained, and going towards affirmative actions. That is, the court is not only declaratory but it's declarations see to it that they are being executed or carried out; court orders a commission to go into matters like bonded labour problems, study them and submit a report. Court affirms itself at the level of affirmation and execution. Even mosquitoes gave rise to public interest litigations. And, I say, it is necessary and possible for us to support the courts and Judges in their effort called "Movement for Judicial Activism".

X. A. R. : Judicial Activism is rooted in the Constitution. Then why they were not activated in the first few decades after the Constitution came into force?

J. K. I. : Obviously, the colonial hang over. Even judicial system was read in colonial auspices. Judges were soaked in colonial learning and so they obviously thought in terms of that kind of erudition, which was imperial in compunction.

X. A. R. : In that context what is your response to the observation by the renowned constitutional expert Mr. Seervi, that you introduce all your personal philosophy into the Constitution?

J. K. I. : Yes, Seervi has said or written so. But Seervi belongs to an age which is bygone. He belongs to colonial age. And he belongs to what we may call oxbridge culture. But today we want third world culture and third world jurisprudence. That requires quite a lot of Activism. We find that Judges are slowly adopting to this kind. But not all Judges. There are many a black sheep. That is why I say, a sharp thrust is necessary to see that the entire judicature acquires this crimson perspective.

X. A. R. : Leave alone the Black sheep. Even otherwise, only the exceptional minority among the top judiciary seem to be sensitive to and aware of the complex political reality. Most of the subordinate judiciary is totally naive to these issues. In that context how do you explain the effectiveness of Judicial Activism?

J. K. I. : To-day the country has come to accept Public Interest Litigations. Whatever happens in the Supreme Court is being repeated in the High Courts. The High Courts are repeated in the District and Sessions Court and still further in the lower judiciary. The subordinate judiciary realize that their performance will be judged by the Higher Courts. It is gradually happening. Unfortunately, everyone is rushing to the High Courts and the Supreme Court. I have been always pleading with the people, "go to Munshifs" They can pass orders about pollution or in the Public Interest Litigations. The Munsif Court is as powerful as the Supreme Court itself. Article 32 of the Constitution of India also provides for decentralisation of powers. Every District and Sessions Judge must be given powers under Article 32 of the Constitution and all of them can exercise the express provision for public good.

So, when people have accepted judicial Activism, nobody else can prevent it. I can say judicial Activism is an invulnerable

development in the Country. Even the entire world has accepted it. Wherever I go, in the foreign countries, they ask about it. Therefore, though the task is tough, no room for disenchantment.

X. A. R.: Therefore in your vision, the scope of Judicial Activism is promising in this socio-economic and political scenario? Is it so?

J. K. I.: We need not despair over the situation. All the same I have my own misgivings. To-day the values are changing. We cannot predict, that what is happening in political, economic scenario will not be repeated also in the judiciary. The Multi-National Corporations that walk freely into the country, privatization, liberalisation and globalisation — all these are cutting at the root of the Constitutional values, namely, Social Justice, Social Security and Democracy and all that. Common man is being ignored. Therefore, these powerful forces can even exert pressure to change the judicature. So, it becomes all the more necessary to build up a very powerful movement to support judicial Activism. On the other hand judicial machinery must gear up to the betterment of the people as a sign of Constitutional values.

X. A. R.: Don't you feel that judicial activism sometimes turn to judicial Extremism? And what are the restraints?

J. K. I.: I do not think that Constitution is a block to judicial activism. But nevertheless, restraints are necessary. We cannot allow judges to run amok, and exercise powers which they do not possess. Some Judges, when they do it, bring discredit to the entire development. So we have to warn those judges. I agree with Justice Ahmadi's expression of "The Lakshman Rekha". We shall not go beyond that. But every thing that is done in judicial activism, is absolutely sanctioned by the Constitution as well as by other laws.

X. A. R.: Can I say that Judicial Activism sometimes comes into conflict with some of the letters of law but confirms with the spirit of law?

J. K. I.: No. Judicial activism is not only the spirit of law, but also the letters of law. And it is enforcement of law in spirit and letters.

But sometimes we must study the circumstances. In public Interest litigations, for example, even writing a mere letter to the Chief Justice is enough to move the courts. But it is applicable

only to the marginalised of the society, who are below the line of legal vision. But some affluent person or community, who can afford a lawyer and present the papers in procedurally formal channel, cannot take advantage of the exemption. And so judicial extremism can be decided only in particular cases.

X. A. R. : There is a lot of inaction in Legislature. Judicial Activism is trying to activate the executive only. Can anything be done to activate legislature?

J. K. I. : Judges cannot help it. Legislature is the direct forum of the people and they are representatives of the masses, elected. Only the people can insist upon the legislature to perform their functions and tone up the legislature to the same wave length of the judiciary.

X. A. R. : The Parliament is attempting to introduce a bill to control Public Interest Litigation. For, they say, the judiciary is stepping into the territory of the Executive. What is your response?

J. K. I. : I think their attempt is totally unconstitutional. There is nothing like a separate territory for the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. We have all, one territory, to be within the constitutional limits.

X. A. R. : Do you think, in that case, judicial activism can lead to real fundamental transformation? Do you see it as a panacea for economic disparities in the country?

J. K. I. : I do not think judicial activism will lead to full revolution. That can happen only if all the Judges are changed. The present class of Judges are all of them, the class of mass variety. The have-nots of this country have not got their Bench yet. The haves have still the upper hand. Therefore the recruitment of judges and appointment of Judges must be done with a sociological attitude. People with deep sympathy for the poor and social causes must be appointed as judges. Supposing a person who has been suffering throughout his/her life, becomes a lawyer and eventually a judge, that person will remember his/her past. Take the case of Justice Ramasamy. He told, during his farewell meeting from the Supreme Court, that he was a coolie and so he will fight for coolies wherever he can. How can one forget that he himself was a coolie at a point of time.

Take my case, I have been associated with the agrarian movements and the working class movements. Therefore I could carry with me the aspirations of the underprivileged, into the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Transformation is in our hands.

X. A. R. : When judicial activism is so fruitful to the underprivileged, the scheduled caste Christians who are also considered untouchables by the society, do not get justice on par with the Scheduled Caste Hindus, what is your observation on it?

J. K. I. : The Scheduled caste Christians, where they are looked down upon by the other members of the community must be given the same facility as other Hindus. Being considered untouchable, is not the only criterion. We must see whether their condition is as deplorable as they were, when they were in the Hindu-fold. Otherwise the Hindu scheduled castes will not be able to reach upto the level of Christian scheduled castes. Atleast the Christians have one leadership, the Church, whereas the Hindu Scheduled castes have no leadership. So it depends on the circumstances. In some places Christians are in a better-off position than Hindu Scheduled castes or atleast becoming. In some other places they are not. Nevertheless wherever the Christian Scheduled castes, suffer similar disabilities as those of Hindu Scheduled castes, there I am for identification of both as one. So, I am for regional classification, as regards the identification of Christian Scheduled castes with Hindu Scheduled castes.

Children and Legal Issues

Sudha Ramalingam

In this article Ms. Sudha Ramalingam, advocate of Chennai High Court presents to us the various conventions and acts in favour of the Children and their protection. She also highlights the measures provided in our Constitution to safeguard the well-being of children. The courts on their part through their judgements and their direction to the states have sought to free the children from their servitude. The author appeals to the need of commitment for the cause of the children and insists on the need of political will and social education so that the legal provisions may be turned into actual reality.

International conventions and national laws have addressed themselves extensively to the issues of children. A declaration adopted by the World Summit for Children in September 1990 says: "The children of the world are innocent, vulnerable and dependent. They are also curious, active and full of hope. Their time should be one of joy and peace, be shaped in harmony and co-operation. Their lives should mature, as they broaden their perspectives and gain new experiences.

But for many children, the reality of childhood is altogether different.

Each day, countless children around the world are exposed to dangers that hamper their growth and development ...

Each day, millions of children suffer from the scourges of poverty and economic crisis — from hunger and homelessness, from epidemics and illiteracy, from the grave effects of the problems of external indebtedness and also from the lack of sustained and sustainable growth in many developing countries, particularly the least developed ones."

Conventions and their Features

The League of Nations (1924) and the United Nations (1959) had adopted declarations about the rights of the child.

Neither of these documents, however, were binding on the governments of the world; they were merely significant statements of principles. Therefore, after much deliberations the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the U N General Assembly in November 1989 and declared open for ratification or accession by states in early 1990. Today no less than 128 countries are parties to the Convention and some 30 others have signed it and thereby indicated their intention to ratify.

On December 11, 1992, India signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention entered into force for India on January 10, 1993. The salient features of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are:

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous, or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

2. States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to relevant provisions of other international instruments, states Parties shall in particular:

(a) Provide for minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;

(b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;

(c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

Children in Indian Constitution

"The Constitution of India is solicitous of children's well-being, development and their rights" says Dr. Upendra Baxi. The following are provided as fundamental Rights:

Article 15 (3) — Enables the State to make special provisions for children.

Article 23 — Prohibits the traffic in human beings and forced labour.

Article 24 — Forbids the employment of children below the age of 14 years in factories, mines and other hazardous occupations.

The Directive Principles of State Policy provide the following:

Article 39 (e) — Directs the State to safeguard the tender age of children from entering into jobs unsuited to their age and strength, forced by economic necessity.

Article 39 (f) — Directs the State to secure facilities for the healthy development of children and to protect childhood and youth against exploitation and moral and material abandonment.

Article 45 — Directs the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children upto 14 years of age.

Article 51 (e) — Directs the State to foster respect for international Treaty obligations.

Article 23 lays down that Traffic in human beings and begar and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of the provisions shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

The Various Acts

The Supreme Court in the ASIAD case has laid down that employment of any person for payment below the rate of minimum wage, out of compulsion, even arising out of economic compulsion, to be violative of that Article.

Article 24 prohibits employment of children in the factories, etc. There are other specific acts relating to children such as the Children (pledging of labour) Act, 1933, The Employment of Children Act, 1938, Employment of Children (Amendment) Act (1978), The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986), Juvenile Justice Act (1986), Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929), Acts relating to Adoptions, Guardianship, Maintenance, provisions related to children in the criminal Procedure Code, Plantation labour, Young persons Harmful Publications Act etc. There are also several other Acts which address the provisions of employment of and conditions of children in employment of various mines, factories, Motor Transport, Shipping, Plantations, Beedi and Cigar industries, etc.

Who is a Child?

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen

years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." In Indian law child is defined differently in various laws. Under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 anyone over the age of twelve is considered an adult. Under the Juvenile Justice Act, a boy who has not attained the age of sixteen years and a girl who has not attained the age of eighteen years are child. In Family Law "child" means a person who, if a male, has not completed twenty-one years of age, and if a female, has not completed eighteen years of age. Mines Act considers persons below eighteen years of age as child while the Labour Laws such as The Factories Act, 1948, Apprentices Act, 1951, The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 consider "child" as a person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age.

Courts in favour of Children

In spite of deterrent legislations, the Government of India does not have the political will to enforce its laws. It does not even disseminate much information about the Child Labour Regulations. There are altogether a minimum of 55 million children in the country who are in servitude, which means the conditions of each of them is one of bonded child labour. Supreme Court of India has rendered several judgements in favour of children not only pertaining to child labour but even in other spheres like free and compulsory education. In a landmark judgment (*Bhartiya Patita Uddhar Sabha Vs. Union of India and others*) the Supreme Court granted permission for the admission of prostitutes' children into schools without having to state the father's name which was the customary Practice in school admission procedures. The Supreme Court has in yet another case of *M. C. Mehta Vs. State of Tamil Nadu and others* recognized child labour as a "national problem". It has given a series of directions to the State to tackle the problem of child labour. *The Court avers that providing alternative source of income to the family is a pre-requisite to eradicate child labour.* It directs the State to provide employment to the adult in the family in lieu of the child working in a factory or a mine or other hazardous labour. Employers of children must pay Rs. 20,000/- as per the provisions of the Child Labour Rehabilitation-cum-Welfare Fund. The contribution of the State is fixed at Rs. 5,000/- for each child. In the absence of alternative employment, the adult parent/guardian will be paid the income earned on the Corpus

Fund, for each child every month which payment will cease if the child is not being sent for education. In case of non-hazardous employment, the employer will bear the cost of education.

Children in Servitude

The innocent face of a child is an irresistible attraction for every human being. The human finds solace and comfort of continuity of progeny due to the very existence of children. For otherwise the human would not have the impetus to do anything which would reach out beyond his/her life time. Children are the vision of the human's world of tomorrow. It is hence important that humanity addresses itself jointly and severally to the welfare of the children who are the voiceless majority.

International and National efforts have been made to draft and legislate innumerable laws for the welfare and protection of children. But in reality there is constant breach of all the provisions of the legislations in favour of children. We seem to justify the employment of child labour in our house-holds. No automobile mechanic shop or hotel is without child labourers. Even in places meant for recreation of children like the parks, zoo, museums or beaches we find scores of children employed to sell snacks, kites, polish shoes, etc. Many of them are brought from their native villages and held as bonded labourers being deprived of their childhood, family-ties and bonds. Neither the law enforcing agencies nor the citizens ever take note of the gross violation of the enactments while engaging child labour. Our conscience is silent at the plight of children under our very nose. We seem to be thinking about carpet, beedi, cracker and other industries employing organized labour force. Agriculture sector employs more numerous child labourers than any other single industry. There are 55 million children in servitude, that is children working for more than 12 hours a day. Of these nearly 30 million are in agricultural sector.

Commitment Today

There are several National and State Commissions set up for various causes such as the National and State Human Rights Commissions, National and State Women Commissions, Commissions to protect Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, etc. Even as early as 1994 The National Commission For Children Bill was circulated as Bill No. XXX of 1994 in the Parliament but to

date it has not seen the light of the day. This only substantiates the argument that unless WE the people have the will, the children of today and tomorrow will be no better than that of yesterday.

Tamil Nadu has passed a legislation for Compulsory Elementary Education. It has made provisions to punish State Government employees who employ child labour. There are hence a plethora of laws in favour of the "CHILD."

"We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The Child cannot wait. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'. His name is 'Today' "- said Gabriela Mistral.

Conclusion

Greatness and progress of humanity rests on the quality of life we assure for our children. Unless the state and the citizens launch a single point agenda and decide that they will execute the child-rights laws, little can be done for the children. It is the duty of our social-scientists, academicians, elder statesmen, artists, literary personalities, creative thinkers and writers to educate the mass through their respective media to advocate the cause of the Child. The need of the hour is 'Social Education' and not merely 'Social Legislations'.

High Court
Chennai.

Authorities : Law-Keepers or Accomplices?

S. Mariadoss

In this article, S. Mariadoss, a scholar attached to Arul Kadal, Chennai, narrates incidents and presents facts relating to atrocities done to prisoners, under-trials and women. He describes the various inhuman ways of torture employed by the police personnel to extract confessions and statements from the under-trials, and the condition within the prisons themselves. The most tragic of all is the custodial deaths which are on the increase. Of course, the victims or the affected parties could vindicate their claim for human dignity and rights through the courts. But this is hampered by such factors as the expenses involved, the lack of accountability on the part of the officials, delay in judicial process, etc. The article concludes with suggestions for concrete action to change the present state of affairs in favour of the victims.

01. Provoking Incidents

Sometime in 1982 on a rainy night some policemen arrested Madhu, a Chhatra Yuva Sangarsh Vahini activist and six of her co-workers. The police burnt Madhu's skin with lighted cigarettes. During interrogation they caught hold of Madhu's breast, pulled off her dupatta, kicked her and asked her "Haven't you been raped yet?".¹

Doss (29) a coolie in Kanjeeपुरam district, Tamilnadu, was arrested on 26th May '96 for a prohibition offence. He was sent to sub-jail. There he fell ill and so he was taken to the hospital where he died. His death raised serious suspicion whether he died due to injuries caused by the police at the police station.²

Sathish Kumar (13) was taken into custody for charges of stealing articles from a fancy shop. His semi-conscious and

1. *Anubhav*: No. 4, May/June 1994, p. 21

2. *Human Rights in Tamil Nadu: A Status Report-1996*, Peoples Watch-Tamil Nadu, Madurai, p. 3

tortured body was placed in front of his home in the early hours of June 11, 1994. He succumbed to injuries caused by repeated torture at the hands of the police personnel at the police station Mylapore, Chennai.

On June 25 in Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh several women peacefully protesting against the humiliation of Zeenat Naaz, Chairperson of Deoband Nagarpalika Parishad, were brutally assaulted by the police.³

Ramesh aged 12 a child worker was tortured and killed on 24th August 1997 in Basin Bridge, Chennai. He was taken into custody on the allegation of having stolen a bicycle.

On September 2, 1997 Fr. S. Christudhas in Dumka, Bihar, India was stripped naked, garlanded with slippers and made to walk through the town. This barbarous and dehumanising act was enacted in the passive presence of the entire district administration. On false charges he was kept in custody.⁴

Such newspaper reports on "Rape in police custody", "Lock-up death", "Police hushed up lock-up murder", "Custody Violence" have of late, become frequent features in dailies. When we go through the newspapers we feel very much anguished and depressed on reading reports of custodial tortures, rapes and deaths. We learn of the mechanism of atrocities for extracting confession and/or for interrogation purposes. Sadly, of late, rape of the women suspects by the police have become a common practice.

Such disturbing and dehumanising experiences tell us one thing: today custody violence is an issue of great public importance and concern; so too the widespread phenomenon of tortures and deaths in custody. All this is a commentary on the situation of human rights in India. The following figures throw light on custody violence and prove that there is nothing to suggest that the situation has changed for the better.

02. Facts Speak

Since 1991, so many persons have lost their lives in police custody due to police torture.⁵

3. *Economic and Political Weekly*; July 26, 1997, p. 1866

4. *The New Leader*; October 1-15 '97, p. 26

5. *Human Rights in Tamil Nadu: A Status Report-1996*. Peoples' Watch-Tamil Nadu, Madurai, *op. cit.*, p. ii

Tamilnadu :

<i>Year</i>	<i>No of persons</i>
1991—92	12
1992—93	16
1993—94	17
1994—95	14
1995—96 (upto 31-5-96)	2

Delhi: 1989 to 1992 : 138**West Bengal:** 1992 : 150**Andra Pradesh:**

1987 23	1988 17	1989 11
1990 9	1991 15	1992 23
1993 25	1994 24	1995 10

- * Tamilnadu stands second in the country in human rights violations.
- * The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) received 109 cases of custodial deaths during 1994.⁶
- * 248 deaths in custody were reported in Jammu & Kashmir during 1993 which is an increase of nearly 50% when compared to the previous year.
- * Also 1027 SC / ST women in custody have been raped in 1991. 631 SC / ST people in custody have been killed in 1991.

Obviously all these data further emphasise that tortures are the order of the day in our society. What is happening today reminds us of the words of Jayaprakash Narayanan spoken with much pain and anguish: "Like millions of those who had fought and suffered for the country's freedom, I too had a golden vision of independent India. Today when I compare the reality with that vision, I am filled with sadness. And when I ponder over the future that the recent events portend, my heart sinks."⁷

03. Inhuman Violence: Torture

Ordinarily 'torture' is a crime under Indian Law (Sections 330, 331 IPC). It provides imprisonment for 7 years or 10 years. Death due to torture is murder (Section 302 IPC.) The maximum punishment for this offense is death. Generally cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment is inflicted on the detainees. Torture comes from the Latin word *tortura* which means 'twist', 'torment'

6. *The Telegraph*, (Calcutta) April 18, 1995

7. N. A. Palkivala: *A Judiciary Made to Measure*, p. 1

'rack', 'intimidate'. The World Medical Associations in the declaration of Tokyo 1975, defined torture as the deliberate, systematic or wanton infliction of physical or mental suffering by one or more persons acting alone or on the orders of any authority to force another person to yield information to make a confession, or for any other reason."

Patterns of violations and abuses include torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners, and unfair trials for political prisoners. The following are some of the forms of torture adopted by the police to obtain information: Beating, stripping and hanging people upside down and then beating them on head and chest, thumping on the chest with boots, burying them upto chest and then beating or keeping a bucket over the head, squeezing testicles with clamps, dipping in cold water drums, forcefully keeping them awake for days together, denying food or water. But the most common form of torture is subjecting them to electric shocks. Sensitive parts of the body including ears, tongue, armpits, genitals and head are repeatedly given electric shocks, sometimes in increasing measure of voltage; with electrodes at each temple, the brain is subjected to electric waves.⁸ Beating of suspects in police stations is a routine affair.

All this only show that the police generally rely on the use of coercive methods to obtain information about the so-called unwanted elements. The police appear to be poorly trained and equipped in the use of more reliable investigative methods. This practice of resorting to third degree methods (which are in fact illegal) has got ingrained in the law-enforcing agents in the country. There seems to be a queer perception of self-identity among the police: "A policeman who does not beat is not a policeman." Terrorizing the public seems to have become their duty, instead of protecting them. They are supposed to be the guardians and yet they themselves become the perpetrators of violence. As a result, the ordinary citizen does not feel secure in the company of the police. The image of the police in public mind has suffered a serious erosion owing to the prevalence of this practice. Generally the police force is violent on the weaker and powerless sections of the society.

8. *Anubhav*; No. 4, May/June 1994, p, 12

04. Who is a victim?

A victim is said to be a person who dies in police custody, owing to injury, torture caused by the police official in lawful authority by abusing his/her power.

The most vulnerable section of the society who frequently become the victims of torture are *Members of Scheduled Castes, Members of Scheduled Tribes, Migrant Workers, Dalits, Landless Labourers, Political/Social Activists and Journalists, Lawyers, Women of the low income groups, Child labourers, Refugees, Minority groups and other Disadvantaged Communities*. Lawyers, journalists and social activists who attempt to address human rights violation have been detained, ill-treated, tortured, and killed. What has the Constitution to say?

05. Constitutional Claims

Generally a state is said to have two important functions, namely executive and adjudicatory. However, judicial accountability is mostly applied and attributed to the executive function, and not to the adjudicatory function. Needless to say that judicial accountability exists in the vast administrative power of the court. Also we should keep in mind that power should always be coupled with accountability. Accountability of power is the cardinal attribute of both democracy and the rule of law.

Article 22 of the Constitution speaks about the protection of citizens in the event of arrest and detention.

1. When a person is arrested, under the ordinary law of the land, he must be informed soon after arrested (sic) of the grounds of his arrest.

2. An arrested person must be given the opportunity to consult a lawyer of his choice and to be defended by him [Article 22 (1)].

3. No person can be detained in custody beyond 24 hours without the authority of the Magistrate [Art 22 (2)].

→ The Human Rights Protection Act 1993 defines Human Rights as a "right relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual, guaranteed by the Constitution embodied in the international covenant and enforceable by courts in India".

→ According to section 376 of IPC Rape of a woman in police custody carries 10 years of imprisonment.

→ It is also said that harassment, beating up or torture in police custody are very serious offences and the police cannot sexually exploit a woman just because she is in their custody.

→ When the detainees or suspects are beaten or sexually assaulted in police custody, the victim has provision to immediately ask for a medical check-up. And the government doctor is to examine the detainees or suspects and will give a certificate of the injuries.

→ It is said that a notice should be put up in each police lock-up informing the arrested person of his/her rights.

→ It is instructed that an arrested person (female) must insist on being put in a female lock-up, and can ask for a transfer to a police station which has female lock-up. Also she must insist on the presence of a female constable.

→ The police cannot arrest anybody simply by saying that some complaint has been made. They must give full particulars of the offence that one is said to have committed.

→ It is illegal to manhandle a person at the time of arrest. If a person submits to arrest, even touching a person's body can be illegal. A male police cannot touch the body of a woman.

→ When a person is taken into police custody, custody memo in duplicate must be prepared and given to the person's spouse, or guardian or relatives, or any person available at the residence. This custody memo includes some important particulars regarding the person, place, date, time, etc.

In addition to the Constitution there are various social welfare legislations (Public Interest Litigation, Legal Aid Schemes, Judicial initiations) promulgated by the Central & State governments to bring changes in the life-style of the vulnerable sections of society.

But they all seem to remain on paper only. Definitely the reality is contradicting the constitution. As a result, the weaker and vulnerable sections do not get a fair deal even from the enforcement agencies, particularly the police authorities.

06. Contradictions

Within a few days of the Tamilnadu Chief Minister telling senior police officials of the State that they could no longer disown responsibility for custodial death, there was an incident of custodial

death. A middle-aged person (Mohan) was called to police station in a taluk town (Thiruvannamalai, Tamilnadu) for enquiry on the basis of a complaint of trespass and assault, and he was found dead later.⁹ This indicates the increasing gap between what is said and being done.

Can we emphatically say that many authorities of the police station follow the prescribed norms and guidelines to ensure free and fair treatment to detainees, suspects and prisoners? Do the Constitution and Reality tally?

Arrest: Source of Corruption

The power to arrest seems to be one of the chief sources of corruption by the police, and 60% of all arrests are either unnecessary or unjustified. Often the custodial death effected by the torture of the police is attributed to a host of readymade reasons such as natural death, suicide, hyper-tension, shooting-out during the victim's bid to escape or the encounter, lack of proper treatment, jumping into a well etc. The basic question that immediately comes to our mind is: If people are arrested for a necessary and justified cause why should the person try to escape, or what is the need for the police very often to resort to cover up the cases? What is the reason for taking efforts to camouflage the utter callousness on the issue?

Unaccountability of the Police

Again disturbing is the fact that the police officers are never brought to trial, and virtually none is convicted for committing human rights violations. The *Statesman* commented in August 1989: "The main reason why barbarous third degree methods are still used, despite being illegal, is that the police know fully well that they are a protected species and that no harm will come to them if the odd prisoner dies in the lock-up."

Difficulty and delay in Judicial Proceedings

The difficulties inherent in having access to judicial process discourage the registration of cases. What are those difficulties?

(i) Expensive

Certainly the disadvantaged section cannot afford to meet the high costs involved. Therefore they prefer death to life.

9. *The Hindu* 11, September 1997, (Editorial)

(ii) *Language*

Language problem is another obstacle which forbids the ordinary people to have access to the proceedings.

(iii) *Poor Implementation*

Poor and unfair implementation of the court orders is also one of the reasons why ordinary people hesitate to approach the court for their problems. And they are too losing hope in judicial proceedings.

(iv) *Denial by Higher Officials*

Also a major cause of persistence of widespread torture in India is the failure or unwillingness of leading government officials and representatives to acknowledge the practice of torture. And covering up of instances by the police or shielding the responsible police personnel from being brought to justice is routine.

"We don't torture anybody. I can be very categorical about that. Wherever we have had complaint of torture, we've had it checked and we've not found it to be true." This is what the late Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi said on January 1988 when questioned about India's human rights record during an interview on the British television program, *Panorama*.¹⁰

(v) *Other reasons*

According to National Human Rights Commission, there is an increase of almost 300% in the number of reported deaths in judicial custody in 1995. These deaths were caused by poor nutrition, lack of medical care and over-crowding, and in some cases 'torture'.

The truth is that today in most cases of death in custody the local doctor who performs the post-mortem usually succumbs to police pressure leading to a complete distortion of facts.

It is very unfortunate that a jail (Kalyan district prison, Maharashtra) with over 1300 inmates was without a single doctor for several days.¹¹

Overcrowding in jail is very common. Tihar jail in Delhi built for 2500 detainees now houses about 9000 inmates.

10. *Amnesty International India: 'Torture, Rape and Death in Custody'* Amnesty International India Report; 1997, pp. 1-6, 91-96, Documentation Centre, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi 110 003

11. *The Hindu*; August 10, 1997

It is obvious that the poor in most cases cannot produce material before the court in support of their case. Should a judge adopt a passive approach and refuse to intervene, because relevant material has not been produced before him? Would not such an attitude defeat the constitutional and legal rights of the poor? The accountability of judges is not something electoral, but value-accountability and that must guide their decision-making process.

07 What Actions?

The government is seen to 'act' by way of instituting enquiries and suspending some officials in cases of custodial deaths and crimes.

The alleged custodial death of one Mr. Kalia in Kabri village of Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh on September 17, 1997 and the alleged rape of his wife and other women earlier between August 20 and 25, created a lot of unrest in the tribal belt.¹² The spread of public awareness of civil liberties and a close watch against any attempt to deny them are a healthy development.

It is significant that the apex court often seeks report within a timeframe from all the State Governments and Union Territory administration stating that they have complied with its directives relating to cases of arrest and detention.

The Tamilnadu Government constituted a State Human Rights Commission in 1997.

In addition to these, some individuals and some Non-Governmental Organisations have expressed their concern on the violation of human rights in various parts of the country.

08. Questions to Ponder

Daily occurrences of such inhuman and degrading instances lead us to raise a lot of questions. For example:

1. What is the nature and goal of the training imparted to the police personnel? Are their innate human emotions and fine sentiment become blunted in the course of their training? Are the police deprived of independent thinking during training?
2. Why should the police be tardy in their duty during investigation? What makes the police servile towards their higher-ups and dominating over others?

12. *The Hindu*: October 8, 1997, p. 10

3. Why is it that the police are rarely asked to give public account of their actions? How is it that they are left unaccountable towards the people?

4. Has perhaps, the struggle for justice and human dignity by the Dalits brought about a situation in which the official machinery has become apprehensive about their strength and power?

5. Can we say that equal protection is given to each citizen regardless of his/her faith, creed, color and caste?

6. Why do the other political parties remain passive and silent over the events of blatant violations of human rights?

7. Do the police personnel serve as agents of death or promoters of life?

8. The immediate reaction or outcry of the public is very much encouraging. But does the government expect the public to outcry everytime? What motivates or forces the infuriated people to bury their initial wrath and strong reactions to such atrocities?

9. What role does the media-world play in exposing violations against human rights?

10. Have the caste and gender factors something to do? Why is it that only a section of the society (the dalits, adivasis, women) is punished, threatened and victimized?

11. Can the Church afford to maintain silence over such violence?

09. Ten Point Programme

The following is a ten-point programme to combat torture, recommended by the Amnesty International launched in 1961. It is a Non-Governmental Organisation whose sole aim is to promote and protect fundamental human rights in all parts of the world. The first Amnesty International group in India was started in 1968. Till today, it actively promotes the full range of rights enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To prevent, halt and curb torture and other violation of human rights, the following may serve as an effective institutional framework.¹³

13. *Amnesty International India*, 'Torture, Rape and Death in Custody' Amnesty International India Report: 1997, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-6, 91-96, Documentation Centre, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi 110 003

01. Adopt an official policy to protect human rights.
02. Investigate impartially all allegation of torture.
03. Bring the perpetrators to justice.
04. Strengthen safeguard against torture.
05. Inform detainees of their rights.
06. Train the police and security forces to uphold the human rights and reform the police.
07. Compensate the victims.
08. Provide torture victims with medical treatment and rehabilitation.
09. Investigate the causes and patterns of torture.
10. Strengthen India's international human rights commitment.

In addition to the above said proposals the following may also be considered for amendment to better the human rights situation in India. Law should be amended to prevent mid-night arrests of women, because detainees are not always brought before a judicial magistrate within 24 hours of arrest. It should be made mandatory through an amendment of the Constitution that a person should be produced within 12 hours of his/her arrest. It is recommended that India immediately accedes to

- i) Protocol I of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- ii) International Covenant against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (1984)

All this can make the 50th year of independence very meaningful.

Conclusion

Every State Government has to start the crusade against custody violence, namely, custody death, rape and atrocities in different police lock-ups. Unless and until the perpetrators of custody violence are identified and brought to justice, no measures will be effective. Concerned citizens should urge the government to take concrete steps to ensure that brutal practices leading to torture and deaths in custody are immediately stopped. The solemn declaration in the preamble of the Constitution of India should become a living reality in the lives of the underprivileged millions.

Arulkadal,
Chennai.

Judicial Activism in the Old Testament

J. Susaimanickam

Departing from the contemporary issue of judicial activism, J. Susaimanickam, professor of Scripture in Tiruchirapalli and author of many commentaries, tries to explore what message the Old Testament has for us today in this regard. He clarifies the twin concept of justice and righteousness before examining the spirit, structure and dynamics in dispensing justice found among the ancient Israelites. Local sanctuaries and city gates were the places where litigations and disputes were heard and settled. Corruption crept into the judiciary constituted by the elders, and they were admonished and condemned for abandoning the cause of the poor and the defenseless. He weaves into this presentation the significance of the story of Naboth's vineyard. In later times, the kings (Solomon, for example) were invested with the judicial function and they were expected to execute justice and protect the poor and the downtrodden. And they were reminded of it by the prophets. Noting how for the Israelites administration of justice was a communitarian issue, he underscores its importance for the judicial practice today. Further, it is important that the judiciary does not side with the powerful, but commits itself to the defence of the poor in our society.

Yahweh took the oppressed Israelites, in fact the whole exploited lower class of Egypt, completely outside the structures of oppression and impoverishment in order to make of them an egalitarian society, a contrast society, a nation of sisters and brothers in which there would be no poor (cf. Deut 15:4).¹ The covenant laws, namely the different law codes spread out in the Pentateuch, were meant to uphold and realise this great ideal.

1. N. F. Lohfink, *Option for The Poor: The Basic Principles of Liberation Theology in the Light of the Bible* (Berkley, CA: BIBAL Press, 1987) 33-47; G. V. Pixley, *On Exodus: A Liberation Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1987) 118-122

All these codes emphasize concern for the poor, protection of the widows, orphans, immigrants, refugees and slaves, respect for wage earners, prohibition of lending money at interest, and giving of bribes to judges and other officials.²

When this ideal of a 'model society' began to deteriorate and disintegrate, the prophets denounced all kinds of unjust practices and demanded justice.³ The Deuteronomistic reform, undertaken by king Josiah (2 Kgs. 22-23), was a landmark in the history of Israel.⁴

No wonder, then, that the Jewish Rabbis busied themselves with the explication and application of the body of legislation, the Torah.

In this article I would like to focus on the judicial aspect of the Israelite law, namely on how law was administered and practiced, on how justice was done.

Justice and Righteousness

We have very little information about how the judicial system in ancient Israel functioned. However, in order to understand the judicial activities in the Old Testament, it is necessary to have some basic understanding of the twin concepts of justice and righteousness.

The root *spt*, meaning to decide, judge, rule, govern, vindicate, deliver, etc., is used in the forensic context. Justice (*mishpat*), understood as the rendering of judgment, meant the restoration of a situation which promoted equity and harmony which prevailed in a community before the onset of strife or dispute (Gen 16:5). Because Yahweh was originally regarded as the sole judge (*sopet*) of the whole world (Gen 18:25), *spt* as well as its derivative *mishpat* implied a morally good character

2. Rui de Menezes, "Social Justice in Israel's Law", *Biblebashyam* 11 (1985) 10-46.

3. Lohfink, *Option for the Poor*, 59-73. However, wisdom literature and in particular the book of Job underscore the fact that such a just society was founded by God already at the time of creation. See J. Susaimanickam *Commitment to the Oppressed; A Dalit Reading of the Book of Job* (Excerpts from the Doctoral Dissertation; Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1996) 35-37.

4. W. J. Doorly, *Obsession with Justice: The Story of the Deuteronomists* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994).

on the part of the judges (*sopetim*) whose main task was to maintain harmonious relations among the people by making legal decisions in civil disputes (Judg 4:5; 1 Sam 7:15).⁵

The root *sdq* too in verbal form is used mainly in a forensic sense. The *Hiphil* causative means primarily to acquit, justify, declare right, vindicate, etc. Righteousness (*Sedaqa*) refers to right behaviour, a conduct according to what is proper, according to God's order. The one who leads such a life or one who is acquitted is a just/righteous person (*saddiq*). Those at the helm of judicial power were expected to be impartial in giving judgment (Lev 19:15), and not to acquit the guilty wicked for a bribe and reject the right of the just (Isa 5:23).⁶

As hendiadys, the word pair *mishpat* and *sedāqa* (Ps 99:4; Isa. 33:5; Jer 22:3, 15) describes the conduct of people in response to Yahweh's saving action, the proper comportment in every area of life including social justice and equity.⁷ As such, it refers to the character trait granted by Yahweh to the king, a sense of justice with which to judge justly the people, especially the marginalised (Ps 72:1-7, 12-14; Prov 16:12-13).⁸ And doing *mishpat* and *sedāqa* is bound up with actions on behalf of the poor and the oppressed (Isa 10: 1-4; Jer 22: 13-17; Ezek 45:9).⁹

Elders at the City Gate

The local sanctuaries like Shechem, Bethel, Gilgal and Mispah seem to have served also as places where litigations and court cases were settled (Ex 21:6; 22:8).

5. Also the root *dyn*, occurring only 25 times in *Qal* as opposed to *spt* which occurs 180 times, means to judge in a juridical sense and both the roots are used as synonyms. See T. L. J. Mafico, "Judge, Judging", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, III, 1104-1106.

6. J. J. Scullion, "Righteousness (OT)", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, V, 724-36. Also K. J. Scaria, "Social Justice in the Old Testament", *Biblehashyam* 4 (1978) 163-165.

7. Scullion, "Righteousness (OT)", 731, 736. The word order is sometimes reversed (Prov. 2: 9; Ps. 97: 2). They also occur as parallels (Prov. 8: 20; Ps. 72: 2; Isa. 1: 27).

8. R. E. Clements, "Poverty and the Kingdom of God — An Old Testament View", in R. S. Barbour (ed.), *The Kingdom of God and Human Society* (Edinburgh, 1993) 22-27.

9. H. Simian-Yofre, "Justice", in J. S. Marino (ed.), *Biblical Themes in Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL, 1983) 208-209; J. A. R. Donahue, "Biblical Perspectives on Justice", in J. C. Haughey (ed.), *The Faith that does Justice* (New

However, the city gate was in the early days of Israel the centre of social, economic and judicial affairs. In particular, legal matters were settled there by the elders, namely the heads of families in the clan, at the daily morning meetings of all the free male citizens before leaving the city to work in the fields, or on their way back home in the evening (Deut 19:12; 22:15). When it was not possible to settle some matters in an informal way, the meeting changed into a formal court which, after a thorough scrutiny, gave its verdict of condemnation or acquittal (Deut 25:1). The role of the elders/judges, however, was not so much to impose a sentence as to settle a dispute while respecting justice. But they never hesitated to impose penalty on the guilty, if and when needed (Deut 22:18-19). Besides punishments such as flogging (1 Kgs 12:11), bodily mutilation (Deut 25:11-12), restitution (Ex 22:5), imprisonment (Lev 24:12; Jer 37:15) and the like,¹⁰ death penalty was imposed for grave sins like intentional homicide (Ex. 21:12), idolatry (Ex. 22:20) and sexual abuses (Lev. 20:10).

In the book of Ruth we have a clear instance of this. Boaz goes up to the city gate, stops a next-of-kin (*goel*), one who has the right to redeem Naomi's field, and chooses ten elders. And they take their places next to him. The case is stated and discussed between the parties. The next-of-kin renounces his right, and Boaz acquires Naomi's field as well as Ruth's (Ruth 4:1-12).

The elders were thus responsible for law and order in the city and for regularising all transactions between the members of the community. This was possible and feasible, because the sense of belonging and of community was very strong among the people.¹¹ The author of the book of lamentations mourns that the elders have left their sessions, following the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B. C. (Lam 5:14).

York, 1977) 68-85; M. Weinfeld: "'Justice and Righteousness' — The Expression and its Meaning", in H. G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman (eds.), *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 230-46.

10. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961) 151-152; H. J. Boecker, *Law and the Administration of Justice in the Old Testament and the Ancient East* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980) 30-32.

11. Rui de Menezes, "Societies in Transition: Israel and the Tribes of North East India", *Indian Theological Studies* 34 (1997) 28.

When no decision could be reached even after thorough examination, or if the accused could not produce witnesses for the defence, they had recourse to an oath (Ex. 22:10-11),¹² or cast lots to pick out the guilty (1 Sam 14: 38-42).

The judges at the gate were admonished by Yahweh not to accept bribes and pervert justice, but instead to defend the rights of the defenceless poor and to protect the underprivileged (Ex. 23:6-8; Lev 19:15). In point of fact, they began to take bribes and push aside the needy, instead of establishing justice (Amos 5:10-15; Zech. 8:16).

The well known story of Naboth's vineyard is a clear example of how corrupt the judges had become. Tribal society was basically socialistic in pattern. Land was owned by the whole tribe (Mic. 2:4-5). Therefore property was considered inalienable. Naboth's vineyard was his patrimony which assured him of the inalienable rights, privileges and responsibilities of his family inheritance. As W. A. Brueggemann puts it, "This vineyard could not be without Naboth's belonging to it. Naboth could not be without this land."¹³ Naboth, therefore, refused to part with his vineyard. Following this Jezebel, king Ahab's wife, plotted to kill him. Accordingly the elders summoned Naboth to appear before them, and two false witnesses accused him of cursing God and the king. No sooner Naboth was stoned to death, than Ahab grabbed his land (1 Kgs. 21:1-16).

"It is always death for the weaker at the hands of the stronger."¹⁴ Yahweh, however, intruded as a powerful, relentless advocate in the person of prophet Elijah, took up the lawsuit and restored justice (1 Kgs. 21:17-29).

Kings and Administration of Justice

The judges (*sopetim*) mentioned in the book of judges were charismatic leaders who had a specifically military role and sometimes also acted as civil rulers. Except Deborah (Judg. 4:4-5),

12. In default of witnesses or clear evidence, an oath was accepted as settling a case (Job. 31). See J. E. Hartley, "From Lament to Oath: A Study of Progression in the Speeches of Job", in W. A. M. Beuken (ed.), *The Book of Job* (Louvain: University Press, 1994) 94-98.

13. W. A. Brueggemann, *A Social Reading of the Old Testament; Prophetic Approaches to Israel's Communal Life* (ed. by P. D. Miller; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994) 239; Rui de Menezes, "Societies in Transition", 33.

14. Brueggemann, *A Social Reading*, 240.

they were never associated with any function of judgment or arbitration.¹⁵

In the face of the Ammonite crisis which posed a serious threat to their very existence as a free people, the Israelites had no other alternative than opting for monarchy (1 Sam. 11: 1-15).

Though the principal duty of the king in those days was that of the commander-in-chief, the supreme judicial power came to be embodied in him. As judge and executor of justice, he had to master the growing mass of laws, customs and traditions and be able to apply the appropriate one in any given case at short notice, since the Semitic legal procedure had little room for the reserved judgment and thereby give the right decision on the spot. The famous story of Solomon's judgment regarding two mothers claiming the one child is a classical example of this [1 Kgs. 3: 16-28].¹⁶ In this the king was assisted by his royal officials [Jer. 26: 1-19].¹⁷

According to Deuteronomy, Yahweh alone is king for the Israelites [Ex. 15: 18], and hence he is the legislator, the only law-giver and not the king as in other countries. The king, as a leader or viceroy appointed by Yahweh to look after his people [1 Sam. 9: 16; 10: 1], was expected to read some portions from the law everyday [Deut. 17: 18-20]. Therefore he was not above the law, but subject to it, and all the Israelites were equal before the law and equal before Yahweh. But when king Solomon consolidated the royal power, equality among the people was undermined, if not altogether abolished.¹⁸

The duty of the kings was to execute justice and righteousness by protecting the downtrodden and to maintain harmony and peace among the citizens of his state [1 Kgs. 10: 9; Ps. 72]. When the kings failed in this, prophets chided them [Hos. 1: 4; 10: 15]: The Wisdom of Solomon appeals to them to judge rightly [Wis. 6: 1-11].

15. J. A. Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1981) 1-4.

16. We can also recall here the account of the propaganda campaign preceding Absalom's rebellion against his father David, as narrated in 2 Sam. 15: 1-6

17. T. W. Manson, *Ethics and Gospel* (London: SCM Press, 1960) 22-24; Boecker, *Law and the Administration of Justice*, 44-45.

18. Rui de Menezes, "Societies in Transition", 32-42; Boecker, *Law and the Administration of Justice*, 33, 41.

Administration of justice remained ultimately within the competence of the local courts. Needless to say that all kinds of malpractices abounded there. Small wonder that the Judean king Jehoshaphat took up judicial reform in the middle of the ninth century B. C. (2 Chr. 19:5-11). He appointed judges in every city and admonished them against perversion of justice, partiality and taking of bribes (2 Chr. 19: 6-7; cf. Deut 16: 18-20).

Jehoshaphat also established a final court of appeal — some sort of a Supreme Court — for the whole country of Judah, housed in the capital city of Jerusalem, and instructed them to deal courageously with law and to arbitrate in lawsuits (2 Chr. 19:9-11). The college of judges in the capital was introduced and intended to offer the local court a kind of official assistance in the administration of justice, only reserving the capital crimes to the higher court in Jerusalem (2 Chr. 19:10; cf. Deut 17: 8-12). Nothing comparable is known in the northern Kingdom.¹⁹

Conclusion

For the Israelites of old, as indicated above, administration of justice was a community affair and central to their life. Therefore all of them were committed to justice and equity, especially for the poor. Only when administration of justice became the prerogative and monopoly of the elite, experts in law, injustice began to invade the country. On the contrary, in our modern 'complex societies', administration of justice belongs to a very restricted field of social life, and only professionals can find their way through this highly sophisticated field. The common people, therefore, are completely kept out of the judicial system, and like any other system, it has also become corrupt to the core, particularly in post-independent India.

V. R. Krishna Iyer, former judge of the Supreme Court of India, suggests that judicial activism should aim at protecting and promoting the interests of the weak and the exploited:

The hopes and aspirations of the people are not vaporous expectations. These hopes have to be translated into reality by making substantial changes in the way of life of the lowliest but largest numbers of Indians. The Constitution makes

19. Boecker, *Law and the Administration of Justice*, 47-49; De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 153-54; L. Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1986) 106.

that promise in the Preamble. The judges have taken their oath of office based on the Constitution. Therefore, they cannot take sides with the feudal order or colonial compradors or the creamy layer but must uphold the Constitutional directives to salvage the weakest socio-economic segment and preserve the environment.²⁰

This reflects in some way the judicial system of the ancient Israel. And yet an anti-people (lower classes and weakened sections] trend continues to show up among the members of the judiciary, most of them from the upper class, who favour the upper and ruling classes and who take bribes from the powerful and delay, thereby deny justice to the powerless [cf. Amos. 5:12]

A classical example of this is the tragic story of the Bhopal victims — victims of catastrophic judicial process! Thousands of children, women and men were either killed or mutilated or psychologically affected by the gas leakage some thirteen years ago. The victims have not been given a proper hearing. And Union Carbide, a mighty multinational company, came forward to give just a paltry sum of \$ 470 million as against \$ 3 billion claimed as compensation on behalf of the victims by the government of India.²¹

The urgent need of the hour, as we stand on the threshold of the third millennium, is that not only the judiciary, but all people of good will, commit themselves more and more to social justice and concern themselves about ushering in a new world order, where justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream [cf. Amos 5: 24].

St. Paul's Seminary
Tiruchirapalli

20. V. R. Krishna Iyer, "Judicial Activism — Anathematic Usurpation or Functional Desideratum?", *Social Action* 47 (1997) 367.

21. Upendra Baxi, "Judicial Activism: Usurpation or Redemocratization?" *Social Action* 47 (1997) 351–353.

Countering the New Avatars of Injustice

Felix Wilfred

The article is an attempt to place judicial activism in the wider context of contemporary life. It highlights five major shifts that is taking place with the advent of globalization and liberalization, and points out the serious consequences they have for the poor and the marginalized, particularly the depoliticization and exclusion they are bringing about. The new avatars of injustice call for developing new contours of justice as well as the rethinking of instrumentalities to combat them. Judicial activism, based on new legal hermeneutics, has played a very commendable role. However, it needs to widen its scope, for example, by bringing under its purview the censuring of anti-people economic policies of the state. Judicial activism is ultimately an empowering of the people and cannot function effectively without close collaboration and partnership with them.

Human freedom is not to be taken for granted; it needs to be won. For, humanity, when freed from one bondage slips into another. Liberation, therefore, is a continuous project. It is enough to look at the history to realize this truth. The past two hundred years have been a sustained struggle for freedom against the obscurantist forces that maintained a firm hold on human consciousness. The Enlightenment project stands as the symbol of the new spirit of freedom. The struggle for Independence in the Third World nations to cast off the colonial yoke is an important milestone in the history of emancipation. Ironically, the present century which has spelt freedom to many peoples, is also the one which saw brutal tyrants and reigns of terror. Political and military dictatorships have been there all through this century, trampling under foot the dignity and rights of the people.

If until recently, political authoritarianism and hegemony marked the world-order, the whole thing seems to have shifted to the economic realm today. We are experiencing a different

type of tyranny — the *economic dictatorship*. It is killing many more millions than all the dictators in this century have succeeded. Economic dictatorship is a silent killer. By depriving people of the bare necessities of life, and especially food for survival, the new global economic order has become a murderous system. It may not be as sensational as the Nazi holocausts. But it kills all the same children, the old, the blacks, the indigenous peoples, the dalits, the tribals—the weaker ones. It has an in-built eugenics by which the weaker ones are eliminated. The Conference of World Food Organization held in Rome in 1974 pledged to eliminate starvation in the world within ten years. But the sad fact is today there are over 800 million people on the globe who are starving and are undernourished.¹ The major factor in this sad state of affairs is the absolutism of an economic system imposed on our world and in which the poor are at the receiving end, and have no say.

This change has taken place under the banner of globalization² with liberalization as its driving force. With the new dispensation, we are assisting at the new avatars of injustice. New forms of dehumanization, exploitation and manipulation have become the order of the day. Where will the poor turn to? All their traditional securities seem to be tumbling down. They have to look out for new means and instrumentalities to counter these new avatars. The resilience of the poor is their greatest strength. There is no one path, and the need of the hour is a multi-pronged approach. Judicial activism is one of the means today which is accessible to the people in their struggle against new forms of injustice.

This brief contribution wants to study some of the shifts taking place today (I), the new contours of justice emerging and the new instrumentalities required (II), and finally on the need to

1. Cfr. Anuradha Mittal — S. Anantha Krishnan, "Politics of Hunger and Right to Food", in *Economic and Political Weekly*: February 1, 1997. pp. 200-204

2. There are so many different views on the phenomenon of globalization, that Roland Robinson speaks about *discourses of globalization*. (Cfr. Roland Robinson in his introduction to the work of Ananta K. Giri, *Global Transformation, Postmodernity and Beyond*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1998, p. 16. Cfr. also Roland Robertson, *Social Theory and Global Culture*, Sage Publications, London, 1992). True as it is, one should not fall into the danger of turning globalization into simply an academic issue and fail to see its effects through the eyes of the

widen the scope of judicial activism so that it could serve the cause of establishing justice in the changed context (III).³

I. Shifting Scenario

It appears to me that we can distinguish five major shifts in gestation since two decades, and in India since the 1990's. All of them are very much inter-connected.

From Production to Speculation

The strength and growth of the economy of a country, of a people will depend upon its production. It is the important point of reference, and constitutes the "real economy". What we are assisting today is the onrush of a different type of economy. It has little to do with the actual process of production, distribution and consumption. As in production, so too in trade, the actual exchange of goods and services are limited. What outweighs all this is the huge amount of trade taking place at the financial level. I mean finance capitalism is an economy that thrives on currency speculation and on trade of bonds and securities. The caesura of this type of economy from the real production and exchange in which people are involved is a very important factor in the change of scenario.

A nation, a people have to rely on the productive process for its growth and the accumulation of wealth for the people, and not on the strength of speculative money. For a nation to rely on finance capitalism is tantamount to lay its foundation on a big bubble. It could explode at any moment, and that is precisely what happened with ASEAN currency crisis since August 1997. Nations like Thailand, Malaysia, Korea and Indonesia which exuded so much of self-confidence and which were held out as models for the Third World countries are now reeling under the destabilization of their economy by the speculators. Who finally suffer are the poor and marginalized people. Ironically, they never had any say in this type of economy; and yet, it is these poor who have to pay dear; they are thrown out of jobs; even the few welfare measures in their favour have to be given up.

victims, specially in Third World Societies. Isolated from its effects on the masses of the poor, globalization could become grist to the mill of the cold intellectualism of on the hand and on the other hand.

3. These reflections do not intend to be comprehensive. Further, due to space-constraint, the references are limited to just a few.

From Raw materials and Labour to Technology and Finished Product

Raw materials are mostly constituted by natural resources. Human labour transforms them into products. People dwelling in the forests, or on the sea shore, or engaged in fields for cultivation, had direct access to these sources. They possessed a fund of intricate knowledge and skills to deal with their environment and fulfil their needs with dexterity. It was part of their heritage transmitted from generation to generation. In short, the raw materials, the labour and their skills were the real assets on which the mass of the people built their lives. Under industrial capitalism, even when people lost their control over the natural resources, at least their labour was prized; for, without it no capital could accumulate. But today there has taken place a sea-change in all this. The situation is changing to the extent that neither the people nor the state have any real control over the natural resources. These are increasingly privatized. Arun Ghosh portrays two developments in this regard:

First, the undervalued assets of highly profitable (and prized) public enterprises must be progressively divested to private parties including foreign national, the latter now ... being given special tax benefits on the income from such disinvestment. Secondly, scarce natural resources must also be privatized; a beginning was made in the oil sector ...; and now, we are going on to the arena of mining and real estate. A new era reminiscent of the East Indian Company, awaits the coming generations.⁴

Besides being debarred from access to natural resources, the labour of the poor and the marginalized is more and more dispensed with. The attention has shifted to technology and the finished product with elegant packing. What counts is now technological expertise and specialization. The local knowledge of the people is humbled and thrown out of business. From the product as the work of human labour, the focus is shifting to brand names. The consumers are made brand-conscious through the cacophony of the advertisement machinery. In our cities, the nouveaux riches — the middle and upper-middle class — is increasingly brought under the lure of brands.

4. Cfr. Arun Ghosh, "Seli-out of Indian Natural Resources. Development of Ore Reserves of Sukinda", in *Mainstream*. August 24, 1996, p. 17.

From Nation-State to World-Economy

One of the big changes that has taken place — and which has serious consequences for the poor and the marginalized — is the progressive *erosion of the institution of the state*. The status of a people, a nation is determined by the relative position it occupies in this grand global economic net-work. Those countries which do not count in terms of world-economy do not figure in the world map. We know, how the Sub-Saharan Africa is written off from the world-economy; and yet, it is so rich in natural resources and raw materials which, however, continue to be exploited by external agencies.

The present developments have led to a situation in which as Alain de Benoist notes,

Territory is being replaced by *network*, which no longer corresponds to a particular territory, but is inscribed within the world market, independent of any national political constraints. For the first time in history, economic and political space are no longer bound together. This is the deeper meaning of globalization.⁵

The transnational movement of capital has seriously undermined the state as an institution. It has less and less control over the highways and byways which the elusive capital freely moves around, nor has the state any grip over industrial and fiscal policies.

This growing decline of the state and its sovereignty is something that affects the disadvantaged sections of the society. The marginalized segments looked upon the state as their protector. A debilitated state has become now their lost hope. For, it is no more in a position to control the capital, the multinationals, the trade regime, etc., and therefore is entering into compromises with them. Under the overbearing system of world-economy and those who steer it, the state is forced to give up the public sector; in fact, disinvestment from public sector is becoming the order of the day. The lack of a strong public sector renders the state toothless, and it finds itself unable to take on the bullying by big business enterprises.

5. Alain de Benoist, "Confronting Globalization", in *Telos*: No. 108 (Summer 1996), p. 121.

In short, we are moving many steps backwards. In the post-war and post-colonial times, the ideal towards which democratic nations were moving was the transformation of state into a truly welfare state, looking after the well-being of the citizens, specially the weaker ones. Today it has less and less means to invest in primary health sector, universalization of primary education, food-subsidies, etc. These are matters which touch the lives of the poorest of the poor.

From Social Consciousness to Global Consciousness

One of the most preoccupying change that is taking place today is the *eclipsing of social consciousness*. The nineties we are living through is a decade which has lost much of that social elan and vibrancy which characterized the decades between the 60's and 80's. This is one of the serious consequences of globalization. The eclipse of social consciousness could be seen in several realms. The media, for example, is more and more shifting to cater to the needs and tastes of liberalization and globalization. One finds little of the social commitment of the earlier decades in journalism, for example. There is scant interest in public health. Once upon a time the best medical personnel were absorbed in the public health sector which was accessible to the poor people. This is very a important social responsibility. But today, with the new global and liberal orientation, the health sector is getting more and more privatized and far removed from the reach of the poor citizens.⁶ The poor are left to fend for themselves and die without medical care. They have no purchasing power to buy costly medicaments either.

Something very similar is happening in the educational sector. It reflects little social concern. Studies and researches which may benefit the poor are shunned in favour of what may put one in the best competitive position in the globalizing world. Some of the educational institutions have become virtual nurseries and visa offices for emigration to U. S. A., Canada, and other greener pastures. The middle and upper classes are uprooted and alienated from the stark reality of oppression and misery in

6. Cfr. K. Pandey, "Public Hospitals", in *Seminar* 456 (August 1997), dp. 45-51.

their immediate social surroundings. Critical social consciousness appears to be a matter of yesteryears, and there are ever less takers for social sciences; the talk of the town is technology.

From People and their Needs to Commodity and Profit

The latest United Nations' Human Development Report contains a very startling revelation. It tells us that just 358 billionaires in the world possess as much as the annual revenue of 45% of all world's poorest people, that is about 2.3 billion people.⁷ This scandalous fact is but the tip of an iceberg. Many things are concealed behind such growing disparity. This macro reality of disparity is the reflection of what is happening at the micro level. If people and their real needs are the focus of the world economic agenda, then such a disgraceful imbalance could never happen. The very possibility of such an accumulation lies in turning commodity and profit into ultimate value, and placing them above people and their basic needs.

In this philosophy, people do not count. Industrial policies are so framed as to dispense with the employment of people as far as possible. It is no more common that under the roof of one large factory goods are manufactured from the start to the finish. Smaller units are preferred and the parts are made in geographically different locations, and even countries. Such arrangement keeps the workers perpetually under bondage; they have no rights, nor can they organize themselves to press for their legitimate demands. The Damocles's sword of unemployment hangs perilously over their heads. Trade unions meant to protect the rights of workers are turned into ritual entities, without tooth and power to negotiate and bargain.

The needs of the people are basic things: food, clean water, clothing, basic medical facilities, roof over the head, literacy, primary education, minimum transport facilities, etc. But there is little correspondence between these needs of the overwhelming majority of the people in our country — about 500 million people — and the goods and commodities the new economic orientation intends to produce.

7. Cfr. *Human Development Report 1997*, United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP), Oxford University Press. New York, 1997.

The net result of all these shifts and developments we saw can be articulated in two words: *depoliticization*, and *exclusion*. Globalization and liberalization create depoliticization. Politics with the participation of the people is being substituted by technology. Technology is not the only new player; in the depoliticized space enter also religions,⁸ and with them communalism. There is yet another factor which depoliticizes and anesthetizes the social consciousness and interest for the public realm. As Mukul Asthana puts it,

Consumerism is the biggest factor which has contributed to the decline of public realm in recent times. It has replaced the citizen by the consumer. Once the autonomy of the consumer is accepted it becomes difficult to retain the sovereignty of the citizen. A sovereign citizen is an active participant in the life of the *polis*. He has a string of rights and duties which is meaningful only in the public realm.⁹

The worst consequence of the changing new scenario is the reality of exclusion. Contrary to the external image of unifying and integrating, in fact, globalization, is a process of exclusion. It excludes individuals since their labour is less and less in demand; it excludes nations, because they have no say in the network of world-economy controlled by transnational corporations; it excludes cultures, the treasured heritage of peoples, and in its place propagates aggressively a uniform sub-culture of consumerism heavily supported by modern mass-media; it excludes local knowledge and skills of the people with which they interacted with the environment, and in its place are imposed high technological expertise.

Those most affected by these developments in our country are agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, traditional artisans, workers, labourers in unorganized sector in rural areas as well as in urban areas. It is easy to see how the advent of liberalization has completely upset the local structure of labour and employment. In every sector of traditional occupation—whether beedi workers, fisherpeople or tribals, it is posing serious threat

8 Cfr. Rajni Kothari, "Globalization: A World Adrift", in *Alternatives*: Vol. 22, No. 2 (1997), pp. 227–267.

9. Mukul Asthana, "Consumerism and Decline of Public Realm" in *Mainstream*, July 26, 1997, p. 14.

to their livelihood and survival.¹⁰ Those who bear the brunt of it all are the women, and therefore we can really speak of the "feminization of poverty" caused by liberalization and globalization.

II. New Contours of Justice and Rethinking of Instrumentalities

What I am arguing is that the shifting scenario calls for a change in our approach to the issue of justice. In the new situation, justice cannot be simply a matter of equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, etc. With the advent of globalization and liberalization we are faced with a more radical problem. The very inner logic of the system and its growth is built on the exclusion and marginalization of the poor. Therefore, in justice today we are confronted with a deeper issue. I mean, we are called upon to give new content and meaning to justice today.

An example may illustrate the emerging new contours of justice. Let us take the case of workers. In traditional industrial mode of production, it was clear who was the employer, and the workers could fight for their legitimate rights and demands and hope to get their grievances redressed and justice restored. Today, the employer is invisible as is the case in the multinationals and huge business enterprises. There is a certain anonymity and the workers, if at all they have any power, do not know who is the adversary against whom they need to struggle. The question of justice in labour issue, thus, assumes new contours and dimensions, and its characters are different from the classical industrial mould. When we place the issue of justice against the backdrop of the reigning economic system, its features stand out. We also begin to realize how participative democracy, right to information, economic literacy, creation of solidarity, etc., form part of the new agenda of justice. We also understand the need to rethink the various instrumentalities.

10. For example, cfr. K. Srinivasulu, "Impact of Liberalization on Beedi workers", in *Economic and Political Weekly*; March 15, 1997, pp. 515-517; cfr. also G. Parthasarathy, "Unorganized Sector and Structural Adjustment", *Ibid.*, July 13, 1996, pp. 1859-1869.

Participative Democracy — an Issue of Justice

In the traditional conception, democracy is mainly a political question. Today, I think we need to view democracy as *an issue of justice*. We can identify four dimensions in the democratic process: first of all there is the *representation* of the people; then there is the question of *voice* — the right of every one to express freely her or his views, demands, etc., thirdly, there is the question of *due process* which means court and tribunals operating on the basis of equality for all the citizens; finally there is the question of *accountability and transparency*.¹¹ All these are quite in order, and are valid even today. Democracy with these values constituted a political institution and it controlled all the areas of the life of the citizens, including the economic planning and policies.

Now that we experience how the democratically elected legislature, the executive and the state are being pushed to the edge under the conditionalities from without and constraints within the country, we also realize that democracy as an institution is loosing much of its ideals and goals. It needs to acquire a fresh sharpness with direct linkage with the people. That is why in the present circumstances *participative democracy* in which people intervene directly at the micro and macro levels assumes great importance. Democracy needs to become a *movement*. Participation of the people, starting from the local panchayat level onwards at every level and sphere is actually an involvement for justice.

It is only by enlarging the "democratic space" we can counter the new forms of injustice and move towards the eradication of poverty.

Ending human poverty requires an activist state to create the political conditions for fundamental reform. Above all, this requires a democratic space in which people can articulate demands, act collectively and fight for a more equitable distribution of power. Only then will macro-economic management be more pro-poor...¹²

Right to Information and Economic Literacy

No society can deliver justice when it wants to operate by withholding information from the public. Specially when the

11. Cfr. Rajesh Tandon, 'Grassroots Democracy', in *Seminar* 451 (March 1997), p. 37.

12. *Human Development Report*, U. N., *Op. cit.*, p. 105,

informations affect the livelihood of the ordinary people, their survival, their dignity and basic rights, they should be made known and divulged. Secrecy has been traditionally the (weak) weapon of the powerful. They employ censure and repression, instead of persuasion and argument, as a means of control. The cloak of secrecy comes in handy for the despotic powers to cover their weakness and the lack of accountability and transparency. Dictatorial regimes and autocratic institutions have been notorious for the employment of this weak instrument. And that is true very much even today.

Secrecy today is not a question of the politically powerful alone, or the executive institutions; the whole economic enterprise and big business are practicing it. I mean to say, we are in a system in which market and profit are promoted by keeping the people in the dark. Economic policies and decisions are made in which the poor have no say, even though these decisions hit them very hard. Right to information goes beyond a question of bourgeois individual freedom; it is a matter of social justice.

One important means to overcome manipulations in the economic field, is to bring about economic literacy among the people. Now that economy has become all pervasive, people need to be brought to the awareness of its functioning at the micro level and at the macro level.¹³ Economic literacy can generate greater solidarity among the victims whose interests are traded by the powerful. People do not know why prices are shooting up, depriving them of their daily rice. Small farmers do not know how their products made with the sweat of their labour are suddenly priced so low. Poor artisans do not know why the goods once they produced with their traditional skills to make their living, are no more in demand, even as they are pushed to a situation of destitution. Economic literacy will make accessible to the ordinary people vital informations and increase their capacity to counter attempts by the powerful to make a profit at the cost of their livelihood.

“Regenerating People’s Space”

Solidarity is the new name for justice. The culture of globalization and liberalization functions by turning individuals,

13. Cfr. Bunkev Roy, “Right to Information. Profile or a Grassroots Struggle” in *Economic and Political Weekly*; May 11, 1996.

into monads. The poor and the middle class are the victims of the market and the capital — in different ways. By depoliticizing, globalization tries to break the solidarity among the poor; and by the lure of commodities, it keeps the middle class in their private worlds. Even more it creates an aggressive individualism and spirit of competition in them, which are visible in their relationship to the poor and the marginalized in the society. In this depoliticization and infusion of the spirit of competition lie the sources from which new avatars of injustice proceed.

In this context, the fostering of solidarity assumes great importance. It is a matter of, to use the expression of Gustavo Esteva, "regenerating people's space".¹⁴ It can be done in different ways. By building up participation and democracy from bottom up, by activating the public realm and civil society, by creating public opinion.

One such important means is judicial activism. Here is a matter of justice in which the one who files a petition asking for justice is not the one who is affected. He or she is aggrieved at the injustice done to others, specially the weaker sections who are not able to have, for various reasons, access to the courts. Formerly, to file a petition one required the so called *locus standi*. It means, the fact that someone has undergone personally an injustice is the justification for filing a petition. Today, any public-spirited person sensitive to the issue of justice takes it up and files petition to obtain justice for others (*pro bono publico*). When the issue concerns the public in general or people in a particular locality, or a disadvantaged group, it is technically known as Public Interest Litigation (PIL). In India, it was justice Bhagwati of the supreme court, who opened up the possibility of such actions motivated by the spirit of solidarity.¹⁵ In his words,

Public interest litigation is brought before the court not for the purpose of enforcing the right of one individual against another as happens in the case of ordinary litigation, but it is intended to promote and vindicate public interest which

14. Gustavo Esteva, "Regenerating People's Space", in *Alternatives*, Vol. 12 [1987], No. 1, pp. 125-152,

15. Cfr. Poornima Advani, *Indian Judiciary. A Tribute*, Harper Collins Publishers India, Delhi, 1997, pp. 3-37.

demands that violations of constitutional or legal rights of large number of people who are poor, ignorant or in a socially or economically backward position would not go unnoticed and unredressed.¹⁶

Such judicial activism is clearly an expression of active solidarity to bring about justice. It is bound to regenerate and enlarge people's space. More about it in the third part of the article.

Human Rights in a New Mould: Holding in Check the Economic Leviathan

Set in the context of solidarity, human rights today is an important instrumentality to defend the poor against the onslaught of globalization and liberalization. The change of scenario and the new demands of justice call for a re-shaping of this instrumentality in our times.

To place in proper perspective the new challenges we face, it may be useful at least to recall the various stages this instrumentality has passed through. Its beginnings go back to the assertion against absolutist powers and their claims — whether of secular or religious origin. It was spearheaded by the upper classes in the society. A second stage was set by the claims of the people to participate in political power, and it culminated in the universal franchise. A further stage of its developments is constituted by the universal declaration of Human Rights in 1948 by the United Nations underlying which is the recognition of the basic dignity and equality of every human being. One understands this declaration against the backdrop of such horrendous experience as World War II, Fascism and Nazism. A fourth stage came about through the realization that the human rights seem to presuppose the free, liberal individual as the one who is entitled to certain liberties. The condition of the Third World Societies, specially in the post-colonial period, called for collective and social rights. These have come into existence in the form of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966.

It appears to me that we need to give in the present context a new orientation to the instrumentality of human rights.

16. As quoted in Sangeeta Ahuja, *People, Law and Justice. Casebook on Public Interest Litigation*, Vol. 1, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1997, p. 2.

Much of the practice of human rights was directed to the state which was an important point of reference in the claims of rights. In this way, the state power and its sovereignty were held in check. Today the focus has to shift. In the context of big business enterprises and transnational corporations, financial institutions like World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO), we need a remoulding of human rights in such a way that these economic and trade institutions will be held in check. Now that we realize how these institutions contribute to create victims in the poor nations, we need to initiate a struggle against this economic absolutism and dictatorship.

Even as we move against the formulation of a reshaped human rights instrumentality at the international level, we need to actually build it from bottom up. Absolutism is of different kinds — political, cultural, religious, etc., and each one of these forms costs very dear in terms of human dignity and rights. Its story is the story of victims. Today, the greatest challenge we face is the economic absolutism. The struggle of farmers against agri-business, the fight of the fisherpeople against the business of trawler-fishing, the struggle of the tribals to defend their forests and environment from the onslaught of the big economic interests—these and similar efforts at the local level furnish the elements for the moulding of a new human rights tradition focussed on economy. The struggle of the poor and the marginalized against local expressions of economic imperialism is the sure way to challenge new forms of injustice. One needs to continuously keep this economic leviathan under pressure and be alert that it does not devour the laws meant to protect the poor and the marginalized.

Struggle against Pseudo-rights

The importance of re-shaping the human rights becomes even more evident when we are faced with a number of pseudo-rights which the economic absolutism claims for itself. Economic dictatorship has learnt to (ab)use the language of rights for its own interests, specially in the area of trade. One such law regards patents, trademarks, copyright, and so on, which come under Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).¹⁷ Under this regiment of rights,

17. Cfr. C. T. Kurien, *Global Capitalism and the Indian Economy*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1994, pp. 70ff.

one claims to control the field of agriculture, medicine, etc. It is an irony that Third World societies which are so rich in bio-diversity and supply the raw materials, and often the basic knowledge, are forced under these pseudo-rights and are kept under economic bondage. Such rights are invoked to maintain monopoly over trade and ensure continuous profit. The Dunkel Draft, for example, was an attempt, among other things, to defend and protect these rights and monopolies of big business enterprises.

What we have said leads us to address a deeper issue involved. It is the question of the protection of property. When such a protection is extended only to the rich and the powerful, it becomes questionable. The protection of rights of property is not only for the rich and the powerful. How are the poor to protect their precious heritage of the knowledge they have obtained through close observation of nature and interacting with it? There is a robbery of these local-knowledge system which goes unchallenged, simply because there is no way for the poor to defend themselves against the piracy of the powerful.

Affirmative Actions in a New Context

Affirmative action is one of the instrumentalities to reach the goal of social justice and equity in favour of the underprivileged and discriminated against groups in a society. In India, it has come to be known as the issue of reservations. Reservation is enshrined in the Indian Constitution. This has been an important means for the dalits, tribals and backward castes and classes to claim their rightful place in a strongly hierarchical and stratified society. Understandably then, this issue has turned out to be a very controversial question, given the resistance on the part of upper castes and classes.

The battleground for these rights has been the sphere of education, employment, etc. where reservation needs to be applied in favour of the underprivileged groups. In practice, it was the state and its institutions which have come into the picture. But the change of scenario calls for adding new dimensions to this instrumentality. Today education, employment are getting more and more privatized. The public sector is being eroded which means that the policy of affirmative action or reservation loses more and more its constituency, and it stands to be increasingly weakened. It is in this context, we should raise the

question whether the private sector, its business and enterprises can go ahead unaffected by the reservation policy in favour of the underprivileged. To maintain anything like that would mean to absolve the whole private sector from their social responsibility. Now that much of the space once covered by the state is being occupied by private enterprises in the various fields, it is only proper that they also are held responsible for affirmative action. They cannot wash off their hands. In practice, it means reservation for the underprivileged should extend to the educational institutions, hospitals, business enterprises by the private sector. Only in this way, I think, the spirit and goal of the reservation policy could be achieved in the changed circumstances of today.

III. Widening the Scope of Judicial Activism

The reflections we have made thus far lead us to consider in this third part the role of the judicature in rendering justice in the changed circumstances of today. For this to happen, greater social sensitivity on the part of the interpreters of law as well as among the general public is very much called for.

A New Legal Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is an important means in the process of understanding. In fact, every understanding is an interpretation — hermeneutics. While the practice of interpretation with much of the written texts — as in the case of religious texts — may remain an academic discussion among the pundits and religious agents, things look different when it is a question of laws. These touch upon life very much. Hence the way they are interpreted, would make significant difference. Laws need to be interpreted, and indeed innovatively and imaginatively to come to grips with the present-day situation. Judicial activism in its technical aspect is a new legal hermeneutics that interprets the law in such a way that the goal of justice is realized beyond its letter. This hermeneutics has a direct reference to the disadvantaged and marginalized sections in the society. Conventional application of law by legal orthodoxy may tend to overlook this aspect. New legal hermeneutics bound up intimately with judicial activism, has the poor as its focus.

A very instructive example is the interpretation of Art. 21 of the Indian Constitution. It reads: "No person shall be deprived of

his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law".¹⁸ This right to life has come to be interpreted today, thanks to some of the very innovative judges, as *right to livelihood*. Every person, in other words, has the right to have all those things which are necessary to lead a dignified human life. It means then right to food, medical care, shelter, education, employment, just wages etc. The interpretation of the same article on right to life could be invoked for reforms in the condition of prisons, and the treatment of undertrials, and for the rescue of bonded labourers etc. As we can see, the right to life interpreted in this way has very significant and far-reaching consequences for the poor. Whenever these basic demands of the poor are violated, the courts could be approached to redress the injury done to them by commission or omission, either by the state or by private individuals.

There is, of course, the danger of public interest litigation (PIL) being used by the already powerful to their private advantage by petitioning the court in the name of a common cause. And that is why, Upendra Baxi, one of the best experts in the country on legal issues, has suggested that we better use the expression Social Interest Litigation (SIL). By this expression, he wants to underline that this mode of legal action should have social concern as its goal.¹⁹

Casting the Judicial Net Further

Undoubtedly, what is being achieved by judicial activism is very remarkable. But the changing scenario calls for widening further the scope of judicial activism and public interest litigation. One of the purposes of such judicial means is to make the state accountable and transparent. This accountability and transparency has to include today also the economic field which impinge upon the poor. What economic policies the state adopts or subscribes to is a matter of grave concern for the disadvantaged sections in our society. The situation today urges the judiciary to

18. Durga Das Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, Prentice-Hall of India, Delhi, 1993 (15th edition), p. 104 (with commentary). On how this article of the Constitution has been a definite point of reference in many supreme court judgements, cfr. Sangeeta Ahuja, *People, Law and Justice, op. cit.*, Vols. I & II.

19. Cfr. Sangeetha Ahuja, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 7.

intervene in this matter. For the state policy in the economic field can spell disaster in the lives of many poor and underprivileged people. Up to now the judiciary has not gone that far as to adjudicate the economic policies of the state. But I think it is the imperative necessity of the times that the courts and judicial activism enter into this area.

The motive for the self-restraint of the judiciary in not intervening in economic policies, could be the doctrine of the separation of powers. It would like to maintain the relative autonomy of the legislative, executive and judiciary powers. The separation of powers need not prevent judicial intervention in challenging economic policies. There are reasons for that.

It is true, for example, that the legislative power is held by the elected representatives of the people. But the point is when the elected representatives betray the trust of the people, they forfeit their privilege of representation. And in this case, does not judiciary have the role of safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections by intervening and reviewing the policies and measures relating to such a crucial field as economy when they are manifestly anti-poor? In a country like India where the issue for about five hundred million people centres around the bare necessities of life, the state subsidies for food, education, medical facilities and a good public distribution and service system — these are of crucial importance. Now, if under the pressure of external agencies the state cuts into these vital subsidies or even abolishes them, do not the courts have a responsibility to step in to safeguard the fundamental rights of the poor citizens?

A judicial review of the policies of the state seems to be called for by the letter and spirit²⁰ of the Constitution. In fact, through the 42nd amendment made in 1976, the word "socialist" was introduced into the preamble of the Constitution, defining the nature of the nation.²⁰ The implications of this has to be drawn in praxis. Does ninety percent of capitalism mean socialist? Does hundred percent privatization mean socialist? There needs to be correspondence between the spirit and letter of the Constitution and the reality. Who ensures it, if not the judiciary? There should be the way open for the public-spirited person to get redressed

20. Cfr. G. C. V. Subba Rao, *Indian Constitutional Law*, C. Subbiah Chetty & Co., Madras. 1989, p. 29.

by the court the injury done to the poor through policies and programmes of the state which are against the spirit of the "socialist" enshrined in the Constitution.

There is yet another area in which judicial intervention will be required. There are several international covenants and conventions relating to human rights and defence of the weaker sections. India is signatory to many of these instrumentalities. Can we not petition the court on the basis of these instrumentalities so as to make the state accountable to the concerns enshrined in them?

The Issue of Enforcement

Even as we try to widen the scope of judicial activism to benefit the poorest sections, we need to attend to another sad fact. Many of the judgements of the courts resulting from public interest litigation remain not enforced. In this way much of the good works being done by the courts remain handicapped. This situation reminds us of an important truth. The courts alone cannot achieve the goal of social justice for the poor, without the cooperation of the public. This is true also in matters of the enforcement of law. That is why judicial activism can yield best results in a society which is rendered socially conscious from bottom up. In this regard the media and investigative journalism have an important role to play. They can strengthen the judicial praxis in favour of the poor by exposing and bringing to public awareness manifest violations of basic rights taking place in different localities. Condemnation by the court of non-implementation of its judgements can encourage those involved in taking up the cause of the underdog of our society.

The violators — whether the state or the individual parties — can be effectively brought under the regime of law, only when there is general legal education, specially among the poor sections. These sections, besides, need to be assisted by efficient legal aid programmes. Only through such cumulative efforts could public interest litigation become an instrument of justice.

A Disturbing Question

Finally there is a disturbing question, which invites us to see judicial activism as part of a larger transformation in the society. The question concerns the possible corruptions in the

judiciary itself. Today, we assume that the courts can, with judicial activism, render justice to the underprivileged. But how long? Things could take a worst turn when the judiciary betrays the trust the people have reposed in it. In that case even that last hope for the people will be a lost hope. Who will measure the measure?

Conclusion

The terrain of struggles for justice has shifted. Globalization and liberalization are sweeping across the whole world, its every nook and corner, sowing new seeds of injustice. They grow with phenomenal speed. Time is running short to redeem the poor and the disadvantaged from the grip of the new injustices that are spawned by the totalitarian economy. The new forms of oppression, manipulation and dehumanization have become very subtle and sophisticated. Globalization and liberalization exclude the weaker ones, and try to conquer the consciousness of the people with its agenda focused on commodity, market and profit. Depoliticization and eclipse of social consciousness follow. If globalization and liberalization appear to integrate the whole world, in fact, they fragment human togetherness and solidarity, by instilling individualism and spirit of competition.

Globalization and liberalization have brought about such a different situation that the old tools of analysis, strategies and modes of action are proving themselves inadequate to come to grips with the new forms of exploitation and injustice. We require new tools and innovative approaches to counter the new avatars of injustice. We also stand in the present context, in need of reimagining justice with its new contours. Specially in India, against the backdrop of caste-stratification in interaction with globalizing forces, evolving our own distinctive image of justice is called for. The new challenges lead us to rethink instrumentalities too. The issue of human rights, for example, needs to be newly formulated in the context of the present world economy; so too the policy of affirmative action and reservation for the weaker sections.

Judicial activism is a very important tool today to counter the new forms of injustice. Laws can open new avenues when they are interpreted imaginatively and with concern for the disadvantaged in the society. This is what some of the landmark judgments by the supreme court of India tell us. Judicial activism

could, however, make sense only when it is seen as part of a larger agenda.²¹ Further, as the Chief Justice of India, Mr. J.S. Verma recently noted, the significance of judicial activism cannot be reduced to 'ad hoc order' in particular cases;²² rather, out of such individual cases, there should evolve new principles of jurisprudence in favour of the disadvantaged. The challenges of the new situation necessitate the widening of the scope of judicial activism, in such a way that the legislature and the executive are held in check from pursuing economic policies and programmes that threaten the survival of the poorest of the poor. Finally, the larger and most crucial issue is the empowerment of the people, to which judicial activism today has a significant contribution to make.

School of Philosophy and
Religious Thought
University of Madras

21. Cfr. Salman Khurshid, "Judges in Democracy", in *Seminar*, 449 [1997].

22. Cfr. *The Hindu*, January 9, 1998.

Book Reviews

Poornima Advani, *INDIAN JUDICIARY, A TRIBUTE*, Harper Collins Publishers India, New Delhi 1997, pp. xix + 244.

This work by a socially committed legal expert is an attempt to highlight the achievements of the Indian judiciary which has already won so much acclaim world wide. The Indian judiciary has been in the lime light for the past two decades, thanks to some of the very eminent judges who have been sensitive to the plight of the underprivileged sections of our society. Some of their judgements have already found a place in the annals of judicial history. In spite of so much of corruption in public life and political intrigues at all levels, India can be proud of its judiciary, especially at the higher echelons of the system of dispensing justice. We need to pay these judicial luminaries our tribute, and that is precisely what the author does in the book.

Since many of the judges are still with us, and continue to be active in various ways in the service of the society, the writer has followed a novel approach in fulfilling her project. The book is not simply a biographical presentation, but the result of personal conversation and dialogue with *navaratna* — nine judges who adorned the Supreme Court of India. The judges to whom tribute is paid are: P. N. Bhagwati, Balkrishna Eradi, Krishna Iyer, M. H. Kania, H. R. Khanna, Ranganath Misra, R. S. Pathak, R. S. Sarkaria, E. S. Venkataramiah.

Each of these judges has his own specific contribution, and it comes alive when the author lets them speak. Going through the judicial biography of these judges we gain an insight into some of the important shifts that have taken place in the interpretation of the law and its application. One cannot but be struck by the fact that the moral integrity of a judge gets reflected in their judgements. Functioning at the apex court, some of these judges were confronted by very sensitive issues on which they had to give verdict, and their words had enormous political consequences. We may think of cases such as the appeal of Indira Gandhi against the verdict of Allahabad High Court, prior to clamping of emergency.

All eyes and ears of the nation were turned to what the Supreme Court had to say. Meanwhile the fate of the nation hanged in the balance. Or, we may think of the Kehar Singh case or Bhopal tragedy case.

The judges delivering some of these judgements have staked their personal security and their avenues of promotion. For example, we learn that when Justice H. R. Khanna opposed the Emergency laws of detention without trial, he was conscious that he was writing off his promotion as the Chief Justice. And yet without fear or favour he did it, setting an example of how we need to hold moral values aloft, far above petty careerist aspirations. He never became the Chief Justice, but he stands tall in the hearts of all those who value ideals and principles as guiding light in life.

A new quality to the judiciary which these luminaries brought in was to expedite the judicial process. For, as is well-known, justice delayed is justice denied. With piles of files mounting up, justice to the poor and the weaker sections also got buried, leaving little hope to be able to redress the injury done to them. Sometimes the Supreme Court has directly appointed commissions to go into particular issues, so that speedy and enlightened verdict could be given. By speedy disposal of cases, these judges have infused greater confidence into the people. It must, however, be added that with mounting public interest litigation, there is also well-founded fear that the old vice of delay may return once again to paralyze the judicature.

In our country, there is no dearth for laws geared to social justice. But the tragedy is there is little effort to enforce the laws and bring justice closer to the lives of the powerless, nor effective checks so that the culprits who offend the laws do not go scot free. Some of the innovative efforts of the judges went in the direction of giving teeth to those laws and deal with the guilty with a firm hand.

In short, the book is a fine narrative which one can enjoy reading. It has ample food for thought and many incidents and anecdotes which drive home very crucial points on committed judicial practice.

Sangeeta Ahuja, *PEOPLE, LAW AND JUSTICE. CASEBOOK ON PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION*, Vols I & II, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1997. pp. xlv + 906.

Today when public interest litigation has become an important means to bring justice closer to the lives of the under-privileged sections in our society, the two volumes of Ahuja will be welcomed with amazement as a treasure-trove. The book deals in the main with cases of public interest litigation from 1979 up to 1994. Thanks to an epilogue by S. Muralidhar who presents us cases from 1994 to the end of December 1996, we have in these two volumes an up-to-date reference work. Academics as well as grassroots activists will appreciate these volumes. It is thorough and through concrete, but at the same time rich in documentation. One would see in these two volumes a conjunction of activism and theory. Though the author uses many legal terms of technical nature, she presents the issues in such a way that the message comes across unscathed through the technicalities.

The author has done well to bring together under various headings the cases relating to public interest litigation. It may be worth recalling the various issues on which the author throws light through case-studies: prisons and state institutions, the police, the armed forces, injustices specific to women and children, labour in general, bonded labour, urban space, environment and resources, consumer issues, education, politics and elections, public policy and administration, judges, courts and lawyers. The enumeration of the topics dealt with gives us also an idea of the wide spectrum covered by the author. The multiplicity of topics does not, however, betray any incompetence on the part of the author. Surprisingly, she seems to be at home with every issue she addresses. The work reveals that it is the fruit of intense field-research and painstaking interviews with a large number of people engaged in public interest litigation. The author gives a select list of some important interviewees. She has not spared the trouble of preparing a very useful index to both volumes.

People who may not have time to go into the numerous cases the author cites, could nevertheless benefit much by reading the introduction of the book, the conclusion, as well as the few concise pages introducing each of the issues. The author

follows a pattern in introducing the cases. First she frames the issues, then presents the ways of access to justice; then deals with the response of the courts, and finally highlights the contribution made by Public Interest Litigation.

Let me highlight some of the salient features of the two volumes. The author makes a distinction — following Justice Bhagwati — between public interest litigation and socially oriented public interest litigation. It is important to hold in mind this distinction. For, today, we have big business interests and feudal forces trying to exploit public interest litigation to their own advantage. It happens, by projecting as common interest what in fact is only a private concern. There needs to be check and judicial discernment in this matter, so that the social purpose of this legal instrument is not diluted or lost. What presents itself as a hope for the poor should not be allowed to become a lever of power in the hands of vested interests.

The work is critical in approach. It recognizes the merits which are there, but does not spare critique where it is needed. In examining each of the issues, the author is able to give her judicious view on the extent the court, public interest litigation etc., have succeeded or failed. She does not hesitate to point out the drawbacks, the flaws and deficiencies in administering justice. The critique of the author in many places is followed by very useful suggestions and appeals for change. The author recognizes the importance the media, specially investigative journalism can play in highlighting the instances of injustice and violence done to the poor and the vulnerable groups in the society. In fact, the media has already played a very constructive role in realizing the spirit and purpose of public interest litigation. But for some of the committed journalists, the atrocities done to the poor in remote parts of the country would not have drawn national attention.

The author's critique becomes radical when she deals with cases relating to women. There are numerous social evils in our society — some of older origin, and others of recent times. She takes up questions like crimes of dowry-murders, rape etc., or cases pertaining to personal laws. (One will remember the famous Shah Bano case). She notes the limits of our present judicial system to be able to redress the injuries done to women.

Another case is that of prisoners. One cannot but be struck by the fact that very often it is those at the lowest rung of the society who are confined to the prisons as criminals. Dalits and tribals in our society often become victims of confinement. One would benefit what the author has to say about judicial system in relation to prison and prisoners, by reading the works of one of the foremost thinkers of modern times: Michael Foucault. He has an important volume on confinement as a form of disciplining and punishing. Foucault saw in confinement — whether in prisons or in asylum — a means of exclusion of people in which the play of power is pervasive. Ahuja appeals for the reform of prisons by presenting us the cases of public interest litigation on this issue.

Though the issue of labour has been open to many cases of public interest litigation, it is the issue of bonded labourers and workers in unorganized sectors which deserve immediate attention. There does exist Bonded Labour System Act of 1976, which abolishes this practice. And yet, it is one of the serious issues facing the poorest of the poor, who often are forced to be in slave-like condition to pay the debts — often incurred by the previous generations in the family. Ahuja notes that the civil authorities have not been cooperative enough in this matter. Whenever public-spirited persons or organizations came up with cases of bonded labour, it was immediately denied by the authorities, which of course is a big obstacle to render justice to the victims of this system of slavery.

On the whole, the book is an extremely well-done research, written with a spirit of engagement for the cause of the victims in our society. It will help all socially concerned citizens in the country. It can help to understand the legal system in its practical working, its effects, and the spaces open to intervene for the cause of the downtrodden.

Felix Wilfred

Oliver Mendelsohn & Upendra Baxi, *THE RIGHTS OF SUB-ORDINATED PEOPLES*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996, pp. viii + 377.

Mendelsohn from Australia and Baxi from India, when they engaged themselves to bring together in one volume a collection of essays on the theme, their thoughts naturally went to the subalternity closer to their own experiences. The Aboriginals of

Australia are a subordinated people; so too the "untouchables of India". The initial impetus came from these backgrounds which subsequently got widened to include many similar experiences from different parts of the world. It may interest the reader to learn of some of the other issues dealt with in this volume: They range from the subordination of women in the Islamic world to the subordinated peoples of the Soviet North. The book deals, further, with the Indians of Brazil, the Maori of New Zealand, the blacks of South Africa and the tribals of India.

One may wonder what unites all these people together. That leads us to the framework of the book. The editors consider subordination as a category that cuts across some of the traditional divisions. In their words, "We would argue that the value of approaching particular issues through the idea of 'subordination' is that it cuts across the conceptual divisions of race, class and gender, without denying the importance of these perspectives ... Thus it is possible to see subordination arising from a number of sources: colonialism/imperialism, including a considerable diversity of examples such as European colonization of the New World and the 'internal' colonialism of India (relative to the 'tribals') and of the USSR; patriarchy; religion; developmentalism with the devastating ecological and human consequences; and something as broad as statism. All these forces have in common an ideological and cultural drive to subordinate social formations that stand in their way" (p. 5).

In this review, I will just limit myself to highlighting two experiences of subordination - that of the Aborigines, and the subordination of the state which is pervasive. The present plight of the Aborigines of Australia cannot be understood except by the invasion of their land by the West during colonial times. Today, this human group is confined to certain parts of Australia, and manifestly the state is doling out a lot of money for their "development." If there is an instance in which we realize that money cannot solve all human problems, it is the case of Australian Aborigines. With reference to this particular number of Jeevadhara, we may recall here that the Aborigines had their own legal system, modes of justice. These require recognition without which one cannot expect them to integrate into the larger society. The essay by James Crawford, entitled "Legal

"Pluralism and the Indigenous peoples of Australia" goes into the examination of this question.

The second comment concerns the state as the source of subordination. The state is supposed to represent the interests of all the people subsumed under its polity. But, as often happens, the state, for various reasons such as internal security, national unity, development, and so on, keeps some of the powerless and vulnerable groups under subordination. In many instances, the indigenous peoples are viewed as enemies of the state. It is a sad commentary on the political state in our world that the state itself unleashes violence and terror against its weaker people. The claim of the indigenous people for their legitimate rights meets with state-repression on the part of the state.

I would place this book as a significant contribution in the changed scenario of today. In the eyes of the victims and subordinated peoples, the utopias projected by the "grand narratives" do not seem to deliver. There is all over the world a general search for "small utopias" by subordinated people seeking in the very context of their subordination ways and means to overcome it. Rightly then, the authors refer us to the work of James Scott on the "Weapons of the Weak". There is no general pattern for the various subordinated people to get liberated. The "weapons of the weak", of the subordinated people will differ from context to context, from case to case. What is encouraging is the fact that the various movements of the subordinated people cumulatively represent the hope for the future of our world. Reading the book is an exercise in hope.

I may add a tail-piece. Index is a rarity in edited volumes. Here is a different case. The editors have provided us with a very useful index of subjects and names, which adds to the overall quality of the book.

Felix Wilfred

Kancha Ilaiah, *WHY I AM NOT A HINDU, A SUDRA CRITIQUE OF HINDUTVA, PHILOSOPHY, CULTURE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY*, Samya, Calcutta, 1966, pp. xii + 132.

The author is a Reader in political science at Osmania University, and is a dalit by birth. This background is very important for understanding the nature of the book and its style.

He does write with academic competence; but it is not a cold rationalism. As someone who has experienced in his early childhood and all through his life the stigma of "untouchability", the author writes with passion. The treatment of the subject matter, the narration and arguments bring alive the struggles of the underprivileged sections in our society. There is something of an innovative academic methodology in this work.

In fact, the author notes in the introduction, "Narratives of personal experiences are the best contexts in which to compare and contrast these social forms. Personal experience brings out reality in a striking way. This method of examining socio-cultural and economic history is central to the social sciences; significantly, the method of narrating and deconstructing experiences has been used by feminists ... I would argue that this is the only possible and indeed the most authentic way in which the deconstruction and reconstruction of history can take place" (pp. xi-xii).

The whole book can be characterized as a study in contrast. The author distances himself from the ways of Brahmins and Baniyas, and shows how their way of life, values, religion, gods and goddesses are different from those of the dalits. He does this by deconstructing the ideologies and myths surrounding the life of the upper castes. He challenges the attempts to classify the dalits as Hindus. He notes how the dalits have in life many more things in common with Muslims and Christians (as for example meat-eating!) than with Brahmins and Baniyas. What we need, according to the author is "Dalitization" and not "Hinduization".

Particularly striking is the treatment of the author on the "neo-kshatriyas"—"the middle-rung castes who are eager to follow the ways of Brahmins, and the Brahmins are ready to co-opt them into their system, and both of them are joined together today in oppressing the dalits. These middle-rung castes are becoming supporters of Brahminism and "patrons of Hindutva". The Hindutva authoritarianism is contrasted with the dalit way of life which reflects, according to the author, democratic spirit and practice. "Among the Dalitbahujans political relations within the family or community setting are basically democratic. In terms of the parent-children relationship, politics operates in what might be termed a 'patriarchal democracy'. A Dalitbahujan household is not essentially 'private'. In fact the notion of

private does not exist in Dalitbahujan consciousness. ...Dalitbahujan law does not emerge from authority; it arises out of the community" (pp.39-40).

The author lays bare how the post-Independence developments have not been steered to advance the cause of the dalits. On the contrary, the educational system, the civil society, the functioning of political parties and so on are controlled by the upper castes and are oriented towards their advancement. Apropos the political parties the author reminds us how even the communist party leadership is in the hands of the upper castes. The dalits are simply cadres in the party, while the levers of command are controlled by others. Similarly, the capital and industry in the country are controlled by Brahmins and Banyas.

The words of the author regarding education is very thought provoking: "Moreover, the entire scope of education appears irrelevant. None of the skills we have, nothing of the knowledge we possess, have any place in the system. Worse still, our knowledge is rendered non-existent. Our linguistic skills and our vocabulary become invisible. We have been sitting in hostile anglicized and brahminical classrooms that had been built only by extracting the surplus generated by our own parents" (p. 56). I think these words give a lot of food for thought to all those societies and institutions which still want to continue with English medium schools. They are only too happy to continue it for the rich benefits — material and otherwise they reap from this practice. Apparently they have never cared to see what extent the concerns of the dalits and their language and culture are reflected in their institutions, not to speak of how much care they take to admit Dalit children. Of course, we know there is some tokenism and attempt to show that they are pro-poor. We know these are often fine window-dressing, and salesman's (of course, sales-women's) tricks by the five-star educational institutions. But the challenge of the author is that the educational system should be revamped. Our "anglicized" institution-runners will do well to meditate on the words of the academic Kancha Ilaiah who speaks from the depth of the struggles he himself has gone through.

A very important point the author makes is the difference in two types of cultures in our society. One is a culture which is directly linked to the process of production. We may think of the

dalits who work hard day in and day out, and contribute to the actual productive process, and thus to the development of the country. On the other hand, we have a culture which is far removed from this productive process. Those in the second category are the ones who command and keep the dalits in bondage by continuously creating ideological mechanisms.

The difference in the religious sphere too stems from this fact. The gods and goddesses of the dalits are "culturally rooted in production, protection and procreation. They do not distinguish between one section of society and the other, one caste and the other ... Dalitbahujan society never allowed the emergence of a priestly class/caste that is alienated from production and alienates the Goddesses and Gods from the people" (p. 100). The deities of the Dalitbahujans have local origin, and the author names from the part of Andhra Pradesh where he hails from.

The book does not end in some kind of defeatism in the face of what appears to be insurmountable difficulties on the dalit path. He looks with hope to the future. "The future is that of Dalitbahujans in India" (p. 128). The author is aware that a liberated future for the dalits calls for appropriate leadership, dalit penetration into civil society, state and its administrative machinery etc. Given the strong hold of the upper castes in all these areas, he is aware that the change is going to be no cake-walk. The future of India, according to the author is not in Hinduization of India, but in Dalitization of India. With words reminiscent of Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto (Workers of the World Unite), Kancha Ilaiah suggests: "Just as they are shouting from their rooftops (and they have very big houses) 'Hinduize India', we must shout from our toddy palms, from the fields, from treetops and from Dalitbahujan waadas, 'Dalitize India' (p. 132).

For all those who are committed to the weaker sections in the society, to the subaltern peoples, this book is very illuminating. For the upper caste/class holders of power, the book is a mighty challenge. Anyone open to truth cannot simply dismiss the book, but needs to give due attention to it. I would conclude this review with the words of the author in his introduction: "A people [we may add institutions] who refuse to listen to new questions and learn new answers will perish and not prosper" (p. xii).

Felix Wilfred

Editorial

The Community of Jesus' believers was a movement that took its origins from the Spirit of the Risen Jesus. In the course of time the dynamic and charismatic character of the Community was lost in the fossilization and stagnancy resulting from the institutionalization and rationalization that followed. The space for the Spirit was controlled by the institutional process and hence 'life' was conceived as conformity to beatified structures and organized activities. Spirituality was brought to a freezing-point and channelled into determined frameworks.

The Spirit of Jesus has however, from time to time tried to break open the seals of these safety frameworks and initiate the believers into unknown paths outside the canonized "high-ways". Evangelization-2000 gives us an occasion to take up this challenge and to launch out into the unknown ways that the Spirit wants to lead us and start a dynamic "movement" by going through a re-foundational experience and de-territorialization in the wake of the third millennium.

In this issue of *Jeevadhara* we are attempting to recapture the Pneumatic Dimension of the new community on the basis of the Word of God.

Ralph Da Costa S. J. outlines the Pneumatic dimension of the messianic community in the prophetic teaching. The Spirit of God, present and active in the prophet, reveals through him God's designs for the world through his vision of the Messianic community. The action of the Spirit in the formation of this community is well expounded in this article. Augustine Mulloor O. C. D. draws the picture of the charismatic, pneumatic community as envisaged in the Gospels. The Eschatological community, on whose heart the new law is written, has to experience the outpouring of the Spirit. In this article, this particular aspect of the eschatological community is examined, in the context of attempts made to redefine the role of the Church in the third millennium.

Antony Edanad C. M. I. researches into the foundational pneumatic experience of the Church and its growth in the Spirit, as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. The Community of Acts is a challenge to us to stand unitedly, acknowledging the active presence of the Spirit in all members of the Church. Thus being animated and guided by the Spirit we have to be effective witnesses to the living Christ. Finally, Paddy Meagher S. J. expounds the centrality of the Spirit in Christian life as articulated in the Pauline epistles. The Spirit is the source of hope for all believers enabling them to live as worthy disciples of Christ and members of his body. The Spirit is the power that continuously transform every believer into the image of the Son, enabling him / her to share more and more in his glory.

If only we could experience and witness to the recreation of the face of the earth through the renewed dynamic flow of the divine Spirit!

Carmelite Theology College
Manjumel P. O.
Aluva — 683 501

Augustine Mulloor

Pneumatic Dimensions of the Messianic Community according to Prophetic Teachings

Ralph da Costa *

The Spirit of God has been active in history from the moment of creation. The activity of the Spirit has been directed towards perfecting a community of people consecrated to God and thereby realizing God's plan for the world. But often there was its rejection by the people and their leaders. So God raised prophets who exhorted them to fidelity to God and to the formation of a community where love of God and of neighbour would find its fuller expression with service to the poor and downtrodden. The action of the Spirit of God in the formation of this community led by the Messiah toward the fulness of time is the central theme of this article by Ralph Da Costa.

Israel according to the sacred texts, depicted as descendants of Abraham, was constituted the people of YHWH through YHWH's covenant with Moses on Sinai; she preserved her identity by means of the word spoken to her through 'men of God', such as judges, prophets and kings. They were all empowered by the Spirit to accomplish the task to which they were commissioned by YHWH. Here we can see the faith of the people concerning their pneumatic origin and preservation. Israel is God's people, a holy nation and his own possession (Dt. 7:6), because of election and covenant. She sees herself as an integrated and living community centred on the Spirit who is present, acting and communicating his gifts to her.

This belief is certainly one that came to Israel, not at the dawn of her existence, but through her protracted reflection on the presence and activity of the Spirit of YHWH in the vicissitudes of history (Neh. 9 esp. vv. 20 and 30), which is seen as the epiphany of God. Hence in a history of salvation, history itself would be

* The author is Professor of S. Scripture at St. Joseph Seminary, Mangalore.

brought to its perfection in the final glory of the community in eschatological times (Jer. 31:31-34; Ez. 36:24-32). It is in this latter text (cf. Ez. 36:27) that the action of the Spirit is clearly specified as an inner principle of renewal which would guarantee the covenantal observance and thus the identity of the people.

In order to understand how Israel came to this faith, this paper attempts to see its growth through the writings of the prophets of Israel. This would entail:

1. an understanding of the word "spirit" in Israel;
2. the presence and action of the *ruah YHWH* in Israel's prophets;
3. the role of the *ruah* in relationship to Israel's ruler: the Messiah;
4. conclusion: the *ruah* and the ideal community of Israel.

1. The "Spirit" in Israel's understanding

Spirit as Power

From the very first page of the Bible, the *ruah YHWH*, the living breath, the Spirit of God, is seen as having as its sphere of action the whole of God's creation and activity (Gen. 1:2), be it the material world, or the world of humans and their interpersonal relationships with one another and God. "The clear idea of the Spirit that emerges is that of vitality — active power or energy, a superhuman, mysterious, elusive power, that acts both in material creation and in the covenanted people."¹ The Spirit is conceived as the life-giving, wonder-working, power-filled 'wind' or 'breath' of the deity that gives a human person the ability to perform superhuman deeds. As such it could be understood as a quality, an attribute or activity of God in and towards creatures.² Spirit seems to be the distinctive quality of the divine world as it is the personified face, the fount of life and the overcoming of every limitation of space and time. As such it characterizes God's intervention in human history (Qoh. 12:4; Wis. 15:11; Ez. 37:5, 9, 12, 14).

1. H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit* [Fontana Books. Collins, 1962] p. 14f.

2. Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*. [Oxford, Blackwell, 1956] see p. 66ff.

Spirit as hypostasis

While at the beginning of Israel's history, the Spirit is seen as power, effective in the great saving acts of God and of the 'men of God' gradually the Spirit becomes a hypostasis, "that is to say, a separate entity which acts of its own, and is itself concerned with human affairs ... acquiring a kind of mediatory position between God and humans"³, God's Holy Spirit present in the midst of his people, manifested himself in divine gifts and powers which work among that people. The purpose of this omnipotent and creative activity is to create, form and bring to perfection a consecrated people. Hence the action of the Spirit is seen as pushing (Jdg. 13: 25), rushing upon (1 Sam. 10: 6; 11: 6), pulling (Jdg. 6: 36) someone to commitment and decision in regard to the spiritual, personal, covenantal God.⁴

While the early prophets saw the action of the Spirit in the external phenomena of the wonderful, the amazing, the extraordinary and gave to their teaching on the Spirit a quasi-physical character, the greater prophets of Israel raised their teaching on the presence and activity of the Spirit to a moral and spiritual level so as to cover the whole of Israel's religious experience, making the Spirit intrinsic to human consciousness and personal decision.⁵

Spirit as Personality

The Spirit appears to be a divine personality. He is personal divine consciousness in his totality of nature and being, in his activity towards others — Israel and the nations — in the context of human history. The Spirit is God drawing the world into himself and at the same time inserting himself into the world of humans and things in order to draw them into a communion of life with himself. The Spirit is divine transcendence becoming immanent in the world so that he can give to the finite and to the contingent a share in his eternity, absoluteness and infinity of being — his sovereign lordship.⁶

Spirit as Person

Later on, the post-exilic period carries overtones of Spirit being a person, even if not distinct from YHWH, so that the Spirit can grieve, can be hurt or saddened (Is. 63: 10).

3. Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. II, [London, SCM Press Ltd., 1967] p. 60.

4. Eichrodt, p. 50.

5. Robinson, p. 193.

6. Ibid., see pp. 89–94.

The Action of the Spirit

The Spirit directs his action to the realisation of God's plan for the world and for history, specially as seen in that of the chosen people. The Spirit acts in the midst of humans and through them, rendering them holy, freeing them from the presence of all moral evil and operating in them salvation (Neh. 9: 20; Ez. 37: 5, 14), thus giving them the secret of life, recognition of and acceptance with God as Lord (Ez. 6: 7, 10, 13, 14 ...).

The action of the Spirit is discerned in the call of Israel to holiness in spite of her sin (Zech. 13: 9; Ez. 6: 9; Jer. 50: 2), where we see sinful humanity always as the object of God's loving mercy, recipient of his forgiveness which reconstitutes them as his glorious people (Is. 4: 3; 14: 1; Bar. 2: 35; Ez. 11: 20; Mic. 2: 13; 4: 7) and seals it all by means of an everlasting covenant (Is. 42: 6; 49: 6; 55: 3; 59: 21; 61: 10; Bar. 2: 35). Besides, the action of the Spirit in humans makes them witness to the will of God for the nation and this is seen specially in the prophets who are constituted ethical watchdogs of Israel (Num. 24: 2; 1 Kgs. 18: 12; 2 Chr. 20: 14; Ez. 11: 5; Mic. 3: 7f).

The early prophets saw this action of the Spirit in his entering human consciousness and personal decision so much so that the human would come to think the very thoughts of God, know his secret plans and act in the power of that knowledge (Jer. 23: 28). This nearness of God to the human (Dt. 4: 7; Is. 41: 10; 43: 2) effects drawing into human consciousness all that God accomplishes for humans so that they enter into his life, become one with him and like him. As such it is the foundation of human faith, the guarantee of human hope and the well spring of human love for God.

Such a presence and action of God's Spirit makes demands on people to sensitize themselves to it if they truly seek communion with God. One must discern this action in individuals and in the people as a whole, which at times could be transitory and at other times, permanent, seen in the present and directed to the future, when the glorious aeon of God's rule — the triumph of God and the salvation of human kind — will be accomplished in all its fulness.

History, as a series of God's personal interventions directed to a definite goal, can be grasped only by the human of faith, filled

with the Spirit of God (Is. 53: 10). It is through this history — by its being perceived and responded to — that Israel can become an integrated community, fully alive to herself, to the world and to God. The Spirit of God given to Israel, through prophet, judge and king, guides her to live up to the demands her identity as God's chosen one makes on her — a redeemed people, a people who acknowledges YHWH as the supreme Lord with their whole mind, heart, soul and being, in the present and in future (Is. 42: 9; 11: 6; 40: 3; Jer. 31: 33).

2. The Presence and Action of the Spirit in Israel's Prophets

This power of God was understood and experienced by Israel in her being formed and elected by the Spirit (Dt. 7: 6; 14: 2; 1 Kgs. 3: 8; Is. 41: 8f; 44: 2; 45: 4; Hag. 2: 23; Mal. 1: 2), so also in the making of the Covenant (Hos. 6: 7; 8: 1; Jer. 14: 21; 11: 6f) as well as her continuous growth and occupation of the Promised Land under the guardianship of the Judges (Jdg. 3: 10; 6: 34; 41: 29; 13: 25; 14: 6, 19; 15: 14).

Later, this action of the Spirit is seen in the person of Israel's King, who is chosen by the Spirit (1 Sam. 10: 6; 16: 13; 1 Kgs. 19: 15-16) so that he becomes the Anointed of YHWH (1 Sam. 24: 7, 11; 2 Sam. 19: 22; Lam. 4: 20) and shares in the holiness of God, thus becoming an inviolable person (2 Sam. 1: 14, 16), a consecrated person.

But as Israel's kings followed the pattern of other pagan kings, abandoning the Law of YHWH as the standard of government, the presence and action of the Spirit is seen more and more in the prophets raised by God to keep Israel faithful to her covenant with YHWH. While there is no rite constitutive of a prophet, yet the coming of the Spirit, spoken of as 'the Spirit of YHWH or the hand of YHWH came upon me', upon a person chosen by YHWH for reasons best known to him alone, establishes him as the conscience of Israel as also God's spokesperson, the eyes and the head of the people of Israel (Is. 29: 10). This conferring of the Spirit is non-transferable and served to enlist and equip them for God's purpose.

The prophet, at times against his will (Jer. 1: 6; 20: 7ff; Am. 7: 14ff), by yielding to be drawn into the action of the Spirit (Is. 6: 8, Ez. 3: 2f) receives the Spirit and is empowered by the Spirit

to turn Israel back to fidelity to the covenant they had sworn with their God. They are conscious of being penetrated by the Spirit, so that they are in their moral consciousness and religious aspiration able to be bearers of the word of God himself (*Ko amar YHWH*). Theirs is "a unity of fellowship of the human spirit with the divine"⁷, born of their personal communion with God⁸, for the sake of proclaiming God's message to his people that they received in their openness to the Spirit either by way of vision or by some other way of revelation. They consider themselves, being filled with the Spirit, to be the true messengers of YHWH. Israel lists them among the leaders of her people.⁹ As such they are 'a privilege to Israel, a blessing for the time and for the age to come'¹⁰, and their persons were to be considered sacrosanct, to be subject to no violence (Jer. 26), even if history reveals that theirs was a history of hostility, ridicule, opposition and even martyrdom.¹¹

The prophets were conscious of the power of God active in the election and guidance of the people, whether the election was seen in the choice of Abraham, or more probably in the deliverance from Egypt.¹² Yet, they warned the people against taking their election for granted, or as a guarantee of YHWH's protection independent of ethical behaviour. This same power of YHWH was exercised in history as well as in nature without any partiality. His glory fills all the earth and will be manifested in the judgement he exercises over Israel, his people, and all the nations.

Yet, the Spirit given to the Prophet was not especially for the proclamation of judgement and doom; it was for (conversion and) intercession as seen in Am. 7: 25; Ez. 18: 23; Is. 6: 11; 8: 17 and specially Jer. 14: 11. It was here that the mercy of YHWH was revealed towards his people by those appointed by him to stand before him as representatives of the people in their intercessions, and to manifest his will in the critical moments of their existence, when Israel stood at the crossroads of history.

7. Robinson, p. 97.

8. J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* [Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1967] p. 315.

9. Lindblom, see p. 203, fn 155.

10. Ibid., p. 203.

11. Ibid., p. 203, fn 154 and p. 204.

12. Ibid., p. 330f.

The prophet endowed with the Spirit was, for the sake of the people, to interpret for them the meaning and God's claims on them in the dynamic process of history. The goal of prophetic activity and hence of the Spirit given to the prophet, is to get the people "to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with God" (Mi. 6: 8; Jer. 5: 5; 6: 16) and to this is the Spirit of God directing all his activity. Hence, the prophets had no hesitation to exercise their role of warning, condemning, promising, consoling, encouraging all sectors of the society so that they be faithful to YHWH's claim by virtue of the covenant made with them. They do not preach a new religion, but help Israel understand the language of history¹³ and call her back to the true religion to be lived in the actual situations of a fast changing world. The Spirit of the ever faithful God, who moves the prophets to speak these words, works through them to preserve the community as the possession of YHWH.

3. The Role of the Spirit in Relation to Israel's Ruler, the Messiah

One of the prophet's function in Israel is seen in the making of Kings¹⁴, since it is through the leaders that the nation would be guided in its fidelity to the God of the covenant who promised them the land. The same Spirit that chose the prophets would guide them in choosing the right man to be king over the possessors of the land.

The king thus chosen receives the Spirit that gives him the ability to perform superhuman deeds as also the quality of 'holiness' to transform him into a new man, giving him a new heart, a soul filled with supernatural power, a new disposition towards drawing him to a new relationship with his God, namely, that of adoptive sonship (Ps. 2: 7; 2 Sam. 7: 14), with superhuman wisdom (1 Kgs. 3: 12-14), and eternal life which enables him to rule by the strength of YHWH, and righteousness and blessing making him a "man after YHWH's own heart".

Such a king, endowed with the Spirit would be a guarantee to his people of shalom and blessing, salvation and wholeness that would permeate all dimensions of life in the kingdom. In his person the people would realise their nature, their destiny and

13. Ibid., p. 313.

14. Frederick Moriarty, *De Prophetis* [class notes] (Rome, PUG, 1966) p. 29

being. It is his task to bring the people to this God-given destiny, and he would accomplish this by his obedience to the will and law of YHWH, as the spirit-filled prophet ceaselessly reminded him, while warning him that failing this, his destiny and that of his people would be in jeopardy. This is amply borne out by the reading of both Kings and Chronicles, in the light of the Deuteronomist.

The People of the Messiah

This activity of the Spirit, in and through the King, was directed to the creation and preservation of a people consecrated to their God, living an ethical life that accepted and manifested the uniqueness and the absolute sovereignty of YHWH over history. There is nothing magical or miraculous in all this; It is by the inward power that works out a transformation of the human spirit and instils religious and moral powers that is a share in God's Spirit. Human relationship with God thus is no longer the result of one's human efforts, but is the consequence of the gift of God's Spirit that works out a permanent communion of mind and will between God and the human and a manifestation of this oneness with God in words and deeds that give both honour and glory to God.

Such an understanding of the people guided by the king is essentially theocentric and eschatological. Based on God's revelation, his mighty deeds in history, the consciousness which Israel has of her destiny makes her see herself as a community called to inaugurate the new aeon by means of establishing the Day of the Lord, when YHWH comes as the Universal and Just Judge. The Messiah consecrated by the Spirit, is to prepare and lead the community to this Day. Hence, the understanding of what the Spirit intends the messianic community to be would generate the community's understanding of what its Messiah should be. The prophetic literature shows us both these aspects: what the community is called to be; and what the qualities of the Messiah gifted by the Spirit are.

These teachings of the prophets come in the context of Israel's repeated failure to respond faithfully to its sworn word in the covenant: "YHWH will be our God" (Jos. 24; 16ff: Ex. 24: 3), as also of the failure of the son of David to live up to his calling.

The community envisioned in the covenant and proclaimed by the prophets is of a theocentric morality, belief, trust and confidence in YHWH, of justice [care and concern], worship [ritual and obedience], morality, love and gratitude, fidelity, humility, humanity, solidarity, brotherliness in attitude, word and deed, honesty, charity, passionate ardour — in one word, the mirror of God's holiness and goodness here on earth, his varied perfections manifested in his dealings with Israel, so that she should love as she is loved, she be holy as YHWH her God is holy, she know YHWH as she is known by him and experience him as love. The ethical ideals set before the people of their time are those of Israel in the wilderness, their simple agricultural lifestyle, as presented by Hos. 2: 17; ¶ 11: 1 and Jer. 2: 2; 3: 4 and represented by the Rechabites, in opposition to the developed civilisation of city life and its consequent corruption, with the inevitable loss of the social peculiarities of tribal culture and the widespread of bureaucracy, trade, commerce with foreign peoples, selfish individualism with all its inherent discriminations and injustice, its development in moral corruption.¹⁵

If prophetic teaching — pre-exilic and even post-exilic — is basically one of denunciation, it shows how the Spirit of God is calling the people to a faithful response to the Covenantal promise. But it also shows us how the people as also their king were responsible for rejecting the action of the Spirit within them. It was the duty of the prophet to give expression to the Spirit who was hurt by the sin of king and people, but who still called them in hope, to conversion, to life. Thus prophetic teaching opens out to an eschatological remnant and a Messiah according to God's own heart.

The Glorious Messiah and the Eschatological Community

The Spirit in forming the community through king and prophet met with rejection from a people and their rulers who preferred their will and plans to those offered by God in covenantal promise and obligation. Yet, it cannot be said that the action of the Spirit ended in failure. Hope for the future is always part of the prophetic teaching inspired by the Spirit of God concerning both the nation and the king. Thus we have a vision of both an eschatological community and a Messiah.

15. Lindblom. pp. 341ff.

The vision of this Messianic community should be viewed in the light of the origins and growth through centuries of the people of Israel. Starting as a nomadic people with its structures, Israel slowly moved into communities of settlers, devoted to agriculture and commerce, bound together no longer by blood relationships only but by new structures and new laws which would not always be in consonance with the law given them earlier in the wilderness and at Sinai. This is often seen as "apostasy" by the prophets with the consequent appeal to repentance and conversion. It would be the Spirit recalling Israel to its roots. The future of the community should then be envisaged as a return to the wilderness and an agricultural past, but what one does observe in post-exilic prophecy is a community that would have universal dominion and Jerusalem as a capital with the Temple at its centre.

This new creation is seen as exceeding that of the original creation and the centrepiece of God's restoration of the entire created order. Necessarily, it is going to be a new society — more just, more perfect — a society of the poor where justice triumphs over lies, fraud, deceit and every type of wretchedness. The new Israel is, like the old, the work of God, but now it will be the expression of his definitive victory over his enemies both within and outside of Israel. The members of this community will be characterized by the practice of justice and righteousness, and there will be no societal sin or evil in the community, nor structures that are sinful; it will be a new world. This will be the action of the Spirit bringing about the eschatological kingdom (cf. Ez. 38-39; Joel 4; Is. 24-27; Zech. 12-14; Dan. 7-8 as also Mal. 1: 11; Is. 60: 6f; 56: 6f; 2: 2f; 25: 6).

The people of this new community will be Israel re-constituted as the glorious people of YHWH (Is. 14: 1; 4: 3; 28: 5; Bar. 2: 35; Ez. 11: 16-20; Jer. 31: 31-34; Micah. 2: 13; 4: 7), with whom YHWH would establish an everlasting covenant (Ez. 16: 60; Is. 61: 8-10; 42: 6; 49: 6; 55: 3; 59: 21; Bar. 2: 35). The Spirit points to a yet more total and efficacious presence in the future when the action of the Messiah, guaranteed by his presence, will effect in the person a radical transformation, renewing the depths of his being to bring him to a perfect correspondence with God's original plan. The new community then will be formed by the Spirit of God who will anoint the Messiah for accomplishing his task as leader and guide of the people. The Spirit is not given only to

the person of the Messiah but also to the community formed by and belonging to him (Is. 28: 5f; 32: 15; 44: 3; Ez. 11: 19f; 18: 31; 39: 29; Joel 3: 1; Zech. 12: 10).

As such, it would be the full flowering of the covenantal community where (Lev. 19: 1, 18) love of God and love of neighbour would attain its perfect expression and the people be like their God (Lev. 19: 1), who loves them with tenderness and mercy. The world itself would become what God wants it to be through the profound changes his mighty deeds in it accomplishes. This community and the new world would be one of goodness, justice, truth and peace, one that mirrors God Himself by its commitment, in its economic and moral structures, to social justice, solidarity and humanity, so that it achieve its purpose of being good and very good (Gen. 1: 3, 31).

All this is the work of God's Spirit, his power, and will come about in good time. The "coming" kingdom is to be seen as the consummation of God's plan, a divine victory transcending and transfiguring the reality of history so as not to be a human kingdom of any description or a utopia of any social planning, but entirely a work of the Spirit, the creative power of a faithful and merciful God.¹⁶

This eschatological community cannot be considered apart from the Messiah, who is its ruler and its guide to accomplish its destiny. As such the Messiah is the one anointed by the Spirit to undertake the task assigned to him by YHWH, the Lord of history.

It was founded on a spiritual and psychical unity in which each individual is a representative of the whole, and in turn, has his entire private attitude to life shaped by the whole. By their descent from the father of the tribe its members are incorporated as kinsmen/women into a family community and welded into a social unity outside of which there can be no meaningful life for the individual, since s/he would be abandoned to every kind of danger without the protection of law.¹⁷

The Messiah then has as his role the protection of those over whom he rules and who are dependent on him for protection, security and life itself. Hence, the need to guarantee justice towards the poor and the weaker sections of society, who really

16. Bethhard W. Anderson. *The Living World of the Old Testament* [Longman, 1967] p. 549f.

17. Eichrodt, p. 273.

are part of the same family. The nations of the world as they are merged into Israel become part of the community, and hence have to be respected as are the other members of the community. The cultural framework of Israel as tribe and clan now extended to embrace all the nations of the world serves the Spirit to reveal the role of the Messiah as universal king who is to introduce God's sovereign rule over all the earth.

This is expressed in the prophetic promises concerning the Messiah and the Spirit's relationship to the one chosen and anointed by him.

The Suffering Servant Messiah

But what is surprising in the development of the prophetic teaching on the Messiah, as Israel saw its hopes going unrealized, is the transition from the Davidic king, seen as endowed with wisdom and power, to the king as Suffering Servant, Intercessor and High Priest, before he is presented in apocalyptic language as Son of Man in power and glory, the Judge and Saviour who forms the people of the saints of the Most High (Dan. 7: 22).

The portrait of the Messiah must correspond with that of the people and community over whom he rules, so that an analysis of what the Spirit reveals through the prophetic word about the Messiah would indicate also what the Spirit reveals about the Messianic community down through the ages and into the future. As we go through the prophetic texts concerning the Messiah, it is clear that the pictures emerging from the teachings of pre-exilic prophets, and from deuterio-Isaiah and Ezekiel, and from the post-exilic prophets are different.

The pre-exilic prophets linking the Messiah with the Son of David, and the Messianic community mainly with the kingdom of Judah, see the action of the Spirit upon the Messiah for the sake of the community that is given to him to guide and govern. Thus we have the great Isaiah speak of the Messiah as one who would realize Israel's expectation of kingship for his people with the assistance of the Spirit granted him. What the community of the covenant sought was prosperity for which peace and righteousness were essential. The names conferred on the king express his nature, his relationship to the deity and his destiny¹⁸, and in that he gives to the king divine attributes and divine equipment

18. Mowinckel. p. 105.

to realise the purpose for which he is called and empowered as king. His rule will be characterized by the virtues of justice and righteousness which will destroy all evildoers, while protecting his citizens and their rights. Thus, his community will be permeated by righteousness and bliss. What guarantees this is not the talent of the king or his statecraft, but the "zeal of YHWH Sebaoth" (Is. 9:7) which we could understand as the power of YHWH, or the Spirit of YHWH. He will equip his chosen one for establishing justice and bringing about the salvation of his people, and thus restoring Israel to its pristine glory. This same vision is shared by the post-exilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and is seen in Israel's hope placed in Zerubbabel who would destroy all powers and kingdoms opposed to Israel and draw even the foreigners to build up the Temple of YHWH, all because of the Spirit of YHWH granted to the Lord's chosen one.

Deutero Isaiah comes to his vision of the Messiah while Israel is oppressed and reduced to slavery in exile and has to discover her identity and mission in God's plan by means of the word prompted by the Spirit. It is here that the Servant Songs enter, in order to show us how Israel, and in later tradition, the Messiah, are to be understood and live its history.

The Servant is presented as one endowed with the Spirit, with the task of establishing righteousness on earth thereby ensuring peace and prosperity in the world. The Spirit will activate him to speak the prophetic word which will be the right way to both Israel and the nations. This will be not by signs and wonders, but by meekness, with words of encouragement, consolation and compassion. He will be the mediator of salvation not only to the sons of Israel but to the weary of the whole world who stand in need of God's salvation and are called to share in God's promise. Surprisingly Deutero Isaiah here adds, besides the proclamation of the prophetic word as the means of accomplishing his task, also insults, persecution and indignities which will flood the Servant. His carrying all this with the confident assurance that this is YHWH's will for him, and that the Spirit of YHWH will not only support him in them, but will bring about the realisation of His plan for Israel and the nations, shows the Servant in the line of sacrificial victim. This picture finds its perfection in the Fourth Song, where the Servant could be seen as the ideal High Priest.

Saviour of Israel and of the "many", the nations of the world. Made the victim of humans' injustice from birth to death the Servant by means of his death achieves the plan of God for the many nations of the world — their entry into righteousness.

He is thus discovered to be the righteous and the innocent one, the one who vicariously expiates the sin of the peoples and restores them to peace, the right relationship with God and humans, to well being, to the fulness of life. The Servant chosen by God, declared to be the one in whom God delights, acts by virtue of the Spirit put upon him to accomplish the gracious purpose of YHWH for the nations, the building up of a community forgiven of its transgressions, brought into reconciliation, good fortune and salvation.

The Servant thus becomes not only the saviour of Israel but the mediator of redemption for all people to the ends of the earth, the "light to the nations", and thus the restorer of Israel's hopes and fortunes and destiny of being the mediator of blessings to all peoples. This comes about by his "pouring out his soul to death" (Is. 53: 10), who is the righteous one for the guilty nations a free grace or gift of God, so that his plan be realized. It is left to the nations to appropriate this atonement, the redemptive action of the Servant, and come to repentance which opens them to faith and salvation. This will come about by receiving the new heart and the Spirit promised in Jer. 31: 31-34 and Ez. 36. The kenosis demanded of such a repentance will result in a fellowship, a building up of the community, not only among humans, but also with God so that fellowship in the Spirit of YHWH is the basis of all fellowship amongst humans and manifests itself in an activity of reconciliation and communion and community building.

Thus the Servant Songs leads us to what is at times called the Fifth Servant Song (Is. 61: 1-4), where the Spirit is given to the Servant to bring about the glory of God, of humans and especially the poor, fully alive, in his being and in the structures of human society. What is abundantly clear is that here we have, together with the Four Servant Songs, a Suffering Messiah who would certainly contradict all Jewish expectation, but who shows us the plan of God for his community. It is not to be one of domination, but one of service, one that cares for, is concerned about the other, the poor, the suffering, those in need of salvation

and well being. Their concern can not only be the proclamation of the word, but also be of solidarity with those who need most care and concern even to the extent of taking their sin and expiating it in their flesh, thus witnessing in life and death the power of the Spirit that overcomes all obstacles, even that of loving one's self over and beyond the other. The Spirit, because it is of God, and is God, can only be Love, unconditional, unbounded, self-emptying and self-giving, and the community that comes from the presence and action of this Spirit must radiate these same qualities of a love that is God if it is to be holy, perfect, merciful as YHWH is.

The Spirit and the Day of YHWH

The Spirit of YHWH who guides history works in the midst of the nations of the world to create situations which would prosper Israel and bring about her glory. The nation has a future guaranteed by YHWH's promise and this would be realized by his Spirit working in and through Israel's king in the midst of the nations of the world. This hope of restoration granted by the Spirit is essential to the community for its very existence and the meaning of its life, so that Israel has her faith, (her belief in Him committing to him her trust, will and obedience), and hope (relying on Him to accomplish what she believes in because of his power and his fidelity to his word), as the gift of the Spirit.

This hope is seen in the prophetic teaching of the "Remnant" as also in the constant reminders to Israel that there would be a restoration of Israel's fortunes. This is whether Israel sees herself falling prey to the various suzerain powers who subjugated her in the times of the monarchy, or whether she was carried into the Exile after the catastrophe of 587 B. C. In both cases the community was shaken and shattered — the difference being only one of degree — and the prophets' task is one of encouraging and rebuilding shattered hopes and drawing Israel back to fidelity to her covenantal oath. This they achieve by means of the renewed promise of the Messiah, the return of the exiles to the land, the rebuilding of the Temple and the re-establishment of her ancient boundaries. But more than all else, the future is guaranteed by the practice of righteousness (Is. 11:9), itself a gift of the Spirit. YHWH will fight for his people, destroying both human enemies and gods behind these earthly powers, and establish his

kingship over Israel and the world. This is the consistent message of all the prophets, but specially of Deutero Isaiah and the post-exilic prophets. Deutero Isaiah as he interprets the action of God in Israel's history in terms of a Second Exodus, sees YHWH not only as Lord of history but also as Lord of creation bringing into being by means of the power of his word a new creation. His will be the task of destroying despair and unbelief, by creating once again faith and hope in a community assaulted by distress, doubts and despair. The power of the Spirit given him is to draw the people into the community ruled by YHWH whom they recognize and serve as the Supreme Lord of the Universe.

Hence, the Prophet can proclaim the Day of YHWH when Israel will politically become the nation ruled by the Son of David, when foreign nations will be subservient to Israel, the divided kingdom be united into one people, the foreign powers and their gods destroyed, the people restored morally and religiously, suffering and disease brought to an end, and the life span of humans be more than a hundred years — peace and joy, light and life be the attributes of the world, the land and its fertility be restored, the nations established in peace, tranquility and harmony be ruling even the animal kingdom, Jerusalem be the religious and political centre of the world to which all nations will come in pilgrimage. All this will be the work of the Spirit of YHWH (Ez. 11: 19f; 36: 26; 39: 29; Joel 3: 1ff), the renewal of the face of the earth. The purpose God has in mind for the world will thus be realised and the human will exist only for the praise and glory of God.

The community of humankind will now be the people of God, and God will rule the earth through the dominion of Israel and her Messiah. This is because of Israel's philosophy of history — YHWH directing history towards salvation (Is. 45: 22f), so that history becomes a history of salvation; and not merely that of Israel, but of all humankind with all its nations [Is. 45: 18]. Nothing can defeat this plan of God because He has not only the wisdom but the power to accomplish this plan, because He alone is, he alone lives, he alone can and will accomplish all that he purposes. Thus, the prophet, by means of his faith sees and understands God and his plan for Israel and the nations in their inner life and external history. This faith is gifted to him by the Spirit and he is to proclaim it for the sake of building up the community in faith in its moments of crisis.

4. The Spirit and the Ideal Community

The Spirit of God, present and active in the prophet, speaking through him and witnessing God's plan for the humankind reveals God's designs for the world through his vision of the Messianic community.

The community will be the recipient and agent of all the divine gifts and powers that will preserve it in its existence, its purpose and God-given destiny through the course of its history. In it will all his marvellous powers be at work and accomplish his purpose.

The Spirit nurtures hope even in the moments of crisis for this community that even if its history is of small things, the high ideals He has set before it will be realised. It will be the bearer of salvation, the light of the nations.

The community composed as it is of individuals will receive the Spirit and experience his comfort, help and support in the inner-most being of each individual as also in the people as a whole. This will be God's gift to a repentant and converted people who passing through the catastrophes of history their sins have brought them to, will return to their God and follow his ways taught them by the spokespersons, the prophets.

The community will see that every aspect and dimension of its existence, its joys and sorrows, its hopes and disappointments, its dreams and visions will come under the action of the Spirit, so that in all things, persons and situations it can see its God working out his promises towards it for the whole humankind. History has a meaning and that is salvation.

The community thus opens itself to the future because it is the same Spirit that guided its past that will lead it into the future, the realisation of its destiny set by the wisdom and goodness of God.

The Spirit and the Christian Community according to Acts of the Apostles

Antony Edanad *

Acts of the Apostles articulates the foundational pneumatic experience of the Church. It is parallel to the action of the Spirit in and through the Messiah, which is now being realized in and through the Church. The Spirit very creatively involved himself in the history of the Church and opened up new and often very unexpected paths. When this is taken as the paradigm of the Church, the challenges are tremendous.

The frequent references to the Spirit found in the Acts of the Apostles are indicative of the significance of the role that the Spirit of God has in the Christian community according to the author of Acts.¹ The community of the believers, the church, described in Acts is one in which the Spirit is dynamically present, animating, inspiring, guiding, transforming and strengthening it.²

1. Foundational Aspect of the Pentecostal Outpouring of the Spirit

The introductory section of Acts (Ch. 1), which is clearly linked to the Gospel traditionally ascribed to Luke, as the second of a two-volume work (Acts 1: 1-2),³ indicates that what is going to be narrated is in fulfilment of the words of the risen Jesus reported in the Gospel.⁴ It also establishes the continuity between the earthly ministry of Jesus and the life of the community after his resurrection. The apostles are referred to as those whom Jesus

* The author is Professor of S. Scripture at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore.

1. In the Acts there are fifty-five verses where the divine Spirit is explicitly mentioned and his various roles are indicated

2. Although in Acts we find several geographically and culturally distinct Christian communities, we may see these as one community in which the Spirit is the principle of unity and continuity.

3. Hence, we shall refer to the author of Acts as Luke.

4. Compare Lk. 24: 45-49 and Acts 1: 3-8.

chose through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2).⁵ It is not made clear in what manner the Holy Spirit was involved in Jesus' action of choosing the apostles. However, taking into account the role of the Spirit as presented in Luke-Acts we can understand it. Since according to Luke Jesus exercised his ministry as one endowed with the Spirit (Lk. 3: 22; 4: 1, 18) his choice of the apostles (Lk. 6: 12-16) was with the assistance of the Spirit. Moreover, as it is narrated in Acts later, they are to be confirmed as apostles through the Holy Spirit. Jesus began his ministry after God anointed him at his baptism "with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38) and he became "full of the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 4: 1). So also the apostles were to begin their mission as witnesses of Christ after they had been "baptised with the Holy Spirit" and had received "the power" when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Lk. 24: 48-49; Acts 1: 5, 8). The risen Jesus instructed them to await the coming of the Spirit, "the promise of the Father", in Jerusalem where he completed his ministry and from where they had to begin theirs (Lk. 24: 46-49; Acts 1: 4-5, 8). It is a mission of witnessing to Christ that extends "to the ends of the earth" and shall last till he returns in his glory (Acts 1: 8, 11).

Luke describes the fulfilment of the words of the risen Jesus as taking place on the day of Pentecost [Acts 2: 1-41]. The outpouring of the Spirit with the accompanying phenomena of storm and fire [Acts 2: 1-4] is reminiscent of the Sinaitic theophany [Ex. 19: 16-19]. Through the theophany at Sinai the people of Israel was established as Yahweh's people; now with the outpouring of the Spirit the disciples of Christ are constituted the new people of God, the New Israel.

As it is explained in the subsequent proclamation of Peter, it is the risen Jesus who poured out the Spirit on the apostles and those who were with them [Acts 2: 33]. The Spirit they received is the "Spirit of Jesus" [Acts 16: 7]. Jesus received the Spirit from the Father ["the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father"] as fulfilment of God's promises concerning his eschatological saving intervention. That the Spirit is communicated in fulfilment of God's promises is made explicit by the citation of Joel 3: 1-5 in

5. Although "through the Holy Spirit" in 1: 2 can be understood as qualifying "giving instructions", according to Luke's literary style and theology it is to be taken as going with "chosen".

Act 2: 16-21.⁶ It also indicates that the Pentecostal event marks the arrival of the "last days", the new era of salvation (Acts 2: 17). Moreover, the outpouring of the Spirit by Jesus shows that he who was crucified has been raised and exalted by God as the Lord and Messiah (Acts 2: 36). The Spirit given to them in a striking manner is the proof of that inscrutable reality.

The immediate effect of the communication of the Spirit mentioned in Acts 2: 4 as the ability to speak in other languages is a combination of the gift of foreign languages, intelligible to the respective groups of people (Acts 2: 6-10), and the gift of tongues (glossolalia) or enthusiastic speech (Acts 2: 12). However, the emphasis is on the fact that "devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem" could hear, in their own languages, those who received the Spirit speaking about "God's deeds of power". Thus on the day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Spirit it became possible for the disciples to be witnesses of Jesus "in Jerusalem ... and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1: 8). It also signifies the reversal of the confusion of languages at Babel [Gen. 11: 6-9] and the unification of all peoples by the Spirit through the proclamation of the good news.

The formal proclamation of Peter in Acts 2: 14-36, 38-39 is the inauguration of the discourses of the witnesses who were endowed with the Spirit and thus it is also the inauguration of the discourses of the exalted Jesus, the Lord, through his witnesses. Those who accepted the word responding to the discourse and invitation of Peter were baptised and, as understood from Acts 2: 38, received the Holy Spirit, together with forgiveness of their sins [Acts 2: 41]. With the addition of the large number of converts, "about three thousand persons", the community of believers is established and it begins to grow through the action of the Spirit. Luke in his narrative regularly indicates the continuing and constant numerical growth of the community,⁷ which is a process resulting from the dynamic presence of the Spirit.

6. The eschatological era is to be characterised by a special communication of the Spirit according to the prophets (see also Ez. 36: 26-27 and Is. 32: 14-15; 44: 3; Hag. 2: 5; Zech. 4: 6). Luke in his narrative recalls the idea that it was the Holy Spirit who was speaking through the prophets (Acts 1: 16; 4: 25; 28: 25) and was foretelling what is now being fulfilled. The Spirit continues the role of revealing the future through the Christian prophets (Acts 11: 28; 21: 11).

7. Acts 2: 47; 4: 4; 5: 14; 6: 1, 7; 9: 31; 11: 21, 24; 16: 5; also 12: 24, 13: 48-49; 19: 20.

2. The Spirit as the Guiding Principle of the Apostles and their Associates

According to Acts the apostles and their associates are constantly aided and guided by the Spirit in their mission as witnesses of Christ. The Spirit who inspired Peter in his inaugural proclamation continues to do so in his subsequent discourses: when he speaks he does so "filled with the Holy Spirit" [Acts 4: 8]. The witnessing done by the apostles is accompanied by the power of the Spirit manifested through their actions: "With great power (*dynamis*) the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all" [4: 33]. This power is the Spirit whom the risen Jesus promised his apostles saying, "But you will receive power (*dynamis*) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" [Acts 1: 8; compare Lk. 24: 48-49]. The power with which the apostles give testimony to the resurrection of Jesus is the power of the risen Jesus which is made manifest by the miracles which Jesus works through them [see Acts 3: 12-16; 4: 8-10]. This risen Jesus speaks and acts through them, lives through them, with the power of the Spirit. Hence, when the apostles bear witness to Christ the Spirit is bearing witness together with them [Acts 5: 32].⁸ The primary object of this witnessing is that God has raised Jesus who was crucified and has exalted him "as Leader and Saviour that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" [Acts 5: 30-31]. Those who refuse to believe are, therefore, opposing the Holy Spirit [Acts 7: 51].

Those who are associated with the apostles in their mission as witnesses are also persons who are endowed with the Spirit. It is specified that the seven to be appointed for the service of the community must be men "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" [Acts 6: 3]. Consequently, Stephen, one of the seven, is described as a man "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" [Acts 6: 5]. He, being "full of grace and power", could do great wonders and signs [Acts 6: 8]. His Jewish opponents could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke to them [Acts 6: 10]. And, before his martyrdom, filled with the Holy Spirit he saw the glory of God and the exalted Jesus [Acts 7: 55]. Similarly, Barnabas

8, Compare Mt. 10: 20; Lk. 12: 11-12; Jn. 15: 26-27.

is described as a good man who was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith [Acts 11: 24].

The Spirit is also presented as giving specific directions regarding the fulfilment of the mission of the witnesses. The Spirit tells Philip to approach the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch in order to prepare him and lead him to conversion [Acts 8: 29]. And after the completion of this particular mission the Spirit of the Lord transports Philip to another location to continue his ministry [Acts 8: 39].

In both the commissioning and the ministry of Saul [Paul] the Spirit has a decisive role. Ananias is sent by the Lord Jesus to Saul so that he may lay his hands on Saul and thus he may be filled with the Holy Spirit in preparation for his mission as one chosen to bring the Lord's name "before the Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel" [Acts 9: 15-17]. While they are worshipping the Lord and fasting, it is the Holy Spirit who prompts "the prophets and teachers" of the church at Antioch to set apart for him Barnabas and Saul for the work to which he has called them. Thus the Holy Spirit whom they receive through the imposition of hands sends them out on their mission [Acts 13: 1-4]. The Spirit has chosen them as his agents and their work is the work of the Spirit. Saul [Paul] is filled with the Holy Spirit when he confronts their opponent who tries to prevent the success of their divinely entrusted mission. The power of the Spirit becomes manifest in the fulfilment of Paul's words of judgement against the opponent, and that becomes a sign authenticating their proclamation [Acts 13: 9-12]. The Spirit even determines the itinerary of the missionary endeavour of Paul specifying where not to go [Acts 16: 6, 7] and where to go [Acts 19: 21]. The Spirit repeatedly warns Paul about imprisonment and persecutions awaiting him in Jerusalem [Acts 20: 23]. At Tyre through the Spirit the disciples tell Paul not to proceed to Jerusalem [Acts 21: 4]. At Caesarea the prophet Agabus performs a symbolic act and says, on behalf of the Holy Spirit, that in Jerusalem the Jews will bind Paul and hand him over to the Gentiles [Acts 21: 11]. However, Paul is conscious that he is constrained, paradoxically, by the same Spirit to go on to Jerusalem to face the uncertain fate [Acts 20: 22].

3. The Spirit as Gift to the Believers

The apostolic proclamations in Acts are usually concluded with an invitation to repentance or conversion in order to obtain forgiveness of sins.⁹ At the end of the first of these discourses Peter clarifies what exactly is expected of the listeners: "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 38). Those who respond adequately to the proclamation by repenting and receiving baptism will receive the gift that is the Holy Spirit together with forgiveness of their sins. The Spirit whom the apostles and their associates received on the day of Pentecost is to become available to all the believers.

Acts 4: 31 describes how the community that was intimidated by the first major experience of opposition from the authorities was emboldened by the Holy Spirit. As response to their prayer for assistance the members of the community were filled with the Spirit with the accompaniment of a tangible sign ("the place in which they were gathered together was shaken") reminiscent of their Pentecostal experience. As a result of this renewed experience of the coming of the Spirit they were able to speak the word of God with boldness.

The narrative in Acts 8: 4-25 underlines the fact that Christian initiation — the process of becoming a Christian — involves not only the acceptance of the proclamation of "the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus" and receiving baptism (with water), but receiving the Spirit is also essential. Philip's work of proclaiming the word and baptising those who accepted the good news had to be completed with the conferring of the Spirit on the converts by Peter and John. The inset story of Simon the magician further illustrates that the Spirit is God's free gift to believers and it cannot be earned by any merely human endeavour.

The account of Paul's ministry at Ephesus in Acts 19: 1-7 draws a sharp contrast between the baptism of John the Baptist and Christian baptism. The preparatory character of John's baptism is underlined and it is also indicated that baptism without the conferring of the Spirit is inadequate. The believers who had previously received only the baptism of John are baptised again,

9. Acts 2: 38; 3: 19, 26; 5: 31; 10: 43; 13: 38; also 17: 30; 26: 20.

but this time, "in the name of the Lord Jesus". Then Paul lays his hands on them and the Holy Spirit comes upon them, manifesting his presence in them through the gifts of tongues and prophecy.

4. The Decisive Role of the Spirit in

Opening up the Community to the Gentiles

According to Acts the Spirit played a dominant and decisive role in the revolutionary step in early Christianity, which was so far Jewish, of admitting Gentiles to the community of believers and thus making the church open to all. The role of the Spirit in this process is clearly and emphatically described in the account of the conversion of Cornelius and other Gentiles (Acts 10: 1-11: 18). Peter, who is puzzled by the challenging and eventually eye-opening symbolic vision he had, is in no unclear terms instructed by the Spirit to receive the emissaries of Cornelius and to take the bold step of going with them to the Gentile's home with its unforeseen consequences (10:19-20). In the earlier section of the narrative it is an angel of God who directs Cornelius to send the emissaries to Peter (Acts 10: 3-6). However, now the Spirit claims that it is he who sent them. While Peter makes the proclamation about Jesus of Nazareth whom "God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power" the same Holy Spirit comes upon the Gentile listeners of the word causing surprise in the Jewish Christians and prompting Peter to wonder aloud, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptising these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (10: 44-47). It is significant that the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentile listeners of the word happens before they actually receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and thus the Spirit intervenes to settle the question whether the Gentiles can be admitted to the community of believers through baptism. It is also emphasised that this communication of the Spirit is not different from what the apostles and the Jewish Christians had. In the continuing narrative [11: 1-18], where Peter defends his action of admitting the Gentiles into the community of believers against the criticisms of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, the main aspects of this event are recalled and explained further. Peter claims that the Spirit not only asked him to go with the emissaries of Cornelius, but also told him not to make any distinction between the Gentiles and the Jews [11: 12]. In the original narrative [10: 15], however, it was the voice of the Lord that told him so in enigmatic and metaphorical terms. The

voice of the Spirit is the same as the voice of the Lord. The outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles is now seen as comparable to what happened to the apostles and others on the day of Pentecost and as fulfilment of the promise of Jesus, "John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit" [11: 15-16]. It is seen as a second Pentecostal event, making, as it is, a decisive turning point in the life of the church. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit effected the conversion of Jews "from every nation under heaven"; now the same Spirit leads the Gentiles to join the community of the believers.

In the context of the subsequent discussion on the status and conduct of the Gentile Christians [Acts 15: 1-35], the role the Spirit played in the conversion of the Gentiles is again highlighted. In order to stress that in God's new plan of salvation being a Jew is not essential, Peter, recalling the event narrated in 10: 44 says: "God, who knows the human heart, testified to them [the Gentiles] by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us" [15: 8-9]. The decision finally arrived at by the apostles and the elders regarding the norm of conduct for the Gentile Christians is described as one taken together with the Holy Spirit [15: 28]. This decision means that the Gentile converts do not have to undergo circumcision and thus become Jews in order to belong to the community of the followers of Jesus Christ. The Spirit has not only become instrumental in admitting the Gentiles to the Christian community, thus changing its character from Jewish to universal, he has also guided the community to find and establish its real Christian self-identity as distinct from Judaism with all its theological and practical implications.

5. The Community Led by the Spirit

The first of the three major summaries in Acts (2: 42-47)¹⁰ describes the newly formed community of the first converts as a paradigm for all the believers. This description is given immediately after the statement that a large number of people accepted the invitation to receive baptism and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 38-39, 41). Hence, presumably the Spirit they have received is the principle that enables the members of the community to live in

10. The other two major summaries depicting the life of the community in similar terms are Acts 4: 32-35 and 5: 12-16.

such an ideal manner. It is a community in which the members remain faithful to and united with the apostles' teaching, fellowship breaking of the bread¹¹ [Eucharist] and prayers. The fellowship or communion (*koinōnia*)¹² of the believers results from their sharing of faith and it is manifested and strengthened by their sharing of material goods [2: 44-45].

In the second summary [Acts 4: 32-35] this dimension of their fellowship is further emphasised. The oneness of heart and soul of the believers is described as finding its concrete expression in the sharing and common ownership of their possessions. As a result "there was not a needy person among them" [4: 34].¹³ The story of the insincere and scheming Ananias and Sapphira [Acts 5: 1-11] is an illustration, albeit negative, of the significance of this dimension of the community's life. In this context the rhetorical questions put to them by Peter are meaningful: "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?" [5: 3] and "How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?" [5: 9]. These questions imply that they are guilty of sinning against the Spirit. By their subterfuge they were refusing to respond to the Spirit who inspired the members of the community to live their communion generously sharing their wealth with one another. Their sin was, therefore, not merely a sin against the community; it was against the Spirit who is the principle of the communion of the community that they have sinned.

Summing up the situation of the church after the initial opposition and persecution it faced, Luke states, "Now the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace. Being built up and living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort (*paraklesis*) of the Holy Spirit it continued to grow" (Acts 9: 31). The Greek word *paraklesis* means encouragement, exhortation, comfort,

11. It is an expression originally used to signify the ritual opening of a festive Jewish meal; it has become a technical term for the Eucharist (see Lk. 22: 19; compare Acts 2: 46; 20: 7, 11; 27: 35).

12. The Greek word *koinōnia* is derived from the root *koin* (common). The idea of sharing is basic to the words derived from this root. Hence *koinōnia* can mean "participation", 'fellowship' or "communion".

13. Luke presents the Christian community as the ideal Israel. The promise that God made to Israel, 'There will be no one in need among you' (Dt. 15: 4), is now fulfilled in the Christian community.

consolation. It seems that all these semantic nuances are present in the use of the word in this statement. In the face of the opposition and persecution the church was being consoled and comforted by the Spirit; it was being encouraged and exhorted by the Spirit to remain faithful. And thus the Spirit enabled the church to grow. A similar description of the role of the Spirit in the community at Antioch in Pisidia is given in Acts 13:52. Immediately after mentioning the persecution that Paul and Barnabas underwent there, Luke makes the enigmatic statement: "And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit".¹⁴ In spite of the persecution the believers could experience the joy that was imparted by the Spirit they possessed. The Spirit reminded them of the blessing that was theirs as those who were being hated, reviled and rejected on account of the Son of Man, and filled them with joy that Christ had promised to such persons (see Lk. 6:22-23).

The Spirit who is present in the community inspiring its members is also active in guiding the community through its leaders. Paul is reported to have said during his farewell address to the Ephesian elders: "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own (Son)" (Acts 20:28).¹⁵ The leaders of the community are those whom the Spirit has given to the church as its shepherds and he has entrusted them with its care. They have to remember that it has been formed and established through the blood shed by ^{the} Christ. They have to protect the flock entrusted to them by the Spirit from savage attacks of the "wolves" (see 20:29). And they have to seek out and save the lost (see Lk 15:1-7; 19:10). In shepherding the church they should be ready to lay down their life for its welfare following the example of Christ, the model shepherd, who shed his blood for its sake.¹⁶

6. The community of Acts as Paradigm

It is obvious that the intention of Luke in describing the role of the Spirit in the origin, life and growth of the Christian

¹⁴ The expression "joy and the Holy Spirit" in Greek can be understood as hendiadys, meaning "joy of [coming from] the Holy Spirit".

¹⁵ A well attested variant reading of the text is: "... to shepherd the church of the Lord that he obtained with his own blood."

¹⁶ Compare Jn. 10: 11-16; 21: 15-19.

community in Acts is primarily theological rather than historical. The community of Acts is a paradigm of Christian community that has the Spirit as its animating and guiding principle. The Spirit is actively present inspiring and directing both the community as a whole and its members. The influence of the Spirit is seen in all facets and at all levels of the community's life.

By his description of the early Christian community Luke reminds us that the risen Jesus is always dynamically present in the church through his Spirit. The Spirit who brought together people of different languages and cultures enabling them to receive the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ and formed the new people is still present in the church trying to bring down the barriers created by humans and to bring about the unity of all the believers. The Spirit who inspired and directed the Jewish Christian community to accept the Gentiles into the church and to come to the awareness that the New Israel was distinct from the old and the new norm of conduct was not to be circumscribed by the Jewish norms and customs now invites the church to respond boldly to the challenges it faces in the form of religious pluralism, ethnic diversity and cultural multiplicity. The community of Acts is a reminder for us that the communion of believers resulting from sharing of the same faith and the same Spirit and celebrated in the Eucharist ought to find its practical expression in the sharing of what we have with others, especially with the underprivileged and the marginalized. It is an ever-challenging sign for us to be of one heart and one soul loving, accepting and respecting one another, acknowledging the active presence of the Spirit in all members of the church, both in its leaders and others, and thus being animated and guided by the Spirit to be effective witnesses to the fact that Christ is still alive.

Dharmaram
Bangalore

Spirit as the Centre of Christian Life in Paul

Paddy Meagher *

In the theological vision of Paul, Spirit is at the centre of Christian life. This thesis is systematically developed by Paddy Meagher. Starting with the context of Christ-event and the consequent justification experienced by the believers in Christ, the pneumatic dimension of Christian life is crystalized as empowering Spirit, the foundational gift of the Father. This Spirit is the source of hope, dwelling in the deepest core of every believer and continually transforming him to the image of God's Son. The Spirit forms and leads the community of believers.

Introduction

As the Jubilee pushes closer to us the Church has dedicated her efforts at renewal this year by drawing the attention of the Christian community to the Holy Spirit, the forgotten God. Paul has rich reflections on the Spirit.¹ These are found mainly when he is handling other problems, questions and challenges in his Churches. His letters are contextual and reflect aspects of his theology but no system of theological thought. In his letters the Spirit is at the centre of one of his major preoccupations.² This

* The author is Professor of S. Scripture at Vidya Jyoti, Delhi.

1. We shall not include the normal apparatus of footnotes to substantiate points made and authors whose opinions have influenced the study or who agree with the points made. The following writings have been read and consulted at the time of actually writing this article. Byrne, Brendan, S. J. *Romans*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville. 1996. Martin Ralph P., *2 Corinthians*, Word Books, Waco, 1986. Fee, Gordon D., *Paul, The Spirit and the People of God*, Hendrickson, Peabody, 1996. Idem, *Paul's Conversion as Key to His Understanding of the Spirit in The Road From Damascus*. The impact of Paul's Conversion, his Life, Thought, and Ministry, Edited by Richard N. Longenecker, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1997, Pp. 166-183.

2. Fee's study is probably the most extensive existing exposition of this theme in Paul. It is monumental in size and covers all possible texts which could have some relevance. After the exegetical and expository study of individual texts he makes a thematic study of the Spirit in the light of the exegetical study. The study errs in trying to find the Spirit everywhere and yet it is a very good study of the texts and the thematic section is very rich.

concerns his re-interpretation of his religious tradition around the centrality of what God the Father did in and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ his Son and Lord. This culminating revelation of the universal saving power of God is discussed in the context of the major dilemmas of the human religious quest: How is the fundamental relationship with God established and lived? How can we be assured that the journey of faith will end in the experience of the totality of God's love and fidelity?

The centre of Paul's response to the fundamental human dilemma of how to journey to God is the immanence of the divine. This has two dimensions. God's Son entered into the stream of human history, not only as human and a servant but also in some way as identified with the human dominated by sinfulness and death. At this broken heart of the human he was preeminently obedient. The human was transformed in its deepest realms by Jesus crucified and raised. God the Father recreated the human from within and in its deepest reality in and through Jesus Christ, his Son.

The second dimension of immanence is God's gift of the Spirit, the Spirit of God and of the risen Lord. The Spirit entered into the stream of human history and the human at the centre and in the innermost reality of all who share solidarity with Jesus Christ. This Spirit indwelling at the point where the human person is described as "spirit" or in the heart of the human person, in the human person as "body-person", is the dynamic source of newness and the recreative power which is continuously able to transform the human into an ever greater likeness to God. This process is completed when the believer with Jesus Christ shares again in the full glory of God. The Spirit empowers the believer to journey to God in obedience and assures and ensures that hope is not a dream but a wonderful reality.

We shall develop this major aspect of Paul's thought and some subsidiary dimensions. We shall avoid the continued use of the terms "eschatology" and "eschatological" to describe the Christ event and the Spirit. Throughout we presume that what God did in sending his Son and the consequent outpouring of the Spirit into human hearts must be described as ultimate, universal. This was a "sending" and a "giving" which is exhaustive, final, all embracing, utterly gracious and with divine exclusivity. These

acts have the paradoxical characteristics of the complete and the incomplete, the total and the partial, the final and the yet to be. They are "already" and "not yet" events. For the Christian community the deepest hope running through their original religious tradition and being reinterpreted and maturing within Judaism has been fulfilled.

1. Setting the Stage

The Journey to God ... The Human Dilemma

Running throughout at least the Exilic and post-Exilic biblical tradition is a clear sense of pervasive sinfulness and the sense that the chosen People were ultimately powerless and unable to be faithful to their Covenant. A religious trauma casts a long and dark shadow over the thought of religious teachers. As the people questioned God about his faithfulness to the Covenant, so God through the Prophets, teachers, wise leaders questioned the People and was in a sense at a loss.

In various ways the fidelity, power, holiness, mercy and loving kindness of God were affirmed and re-affirmed. There are classical texts in the prophets of the Exilic and post-Exilic periods and in the re-readings of the earlier prophets.

The Torah as the Centre of Hope

The Torah at the centre of the Covenantal bond was re-affirmed, clarified, expanded both in the final stages of the re-reading of texts which became the Pentateuch and in the oral tradition which grew up around the Torah in the traditions of the Fathers. The religious genius of the people understood that at the heart of the drama of human life was the choice between human autonomy before God and the consequent destruction of genuine human freedom and the continuous and humble search for God's will, obedience to it and the consequent flowering of human freedom. The biblical story is the narrative of men and women who live in "the fear of the Lord" and progressively enhance the human and others who are fools and say "There is no God".

The Awareness of the Need for Transformation

Some great theological thinkers and their schools were aware that an interior and radical transformation was necessary to accompany the clarification of Israel's religious identity and her obligations and duties.

Circumcision, claimed to date from the basic Covenant of God with Abraham (Gen. 17: 9-14) was a distinctive mark of God's People. It was the symbol of their being elect and set apart, holy to their God. The Deuteronomic tradition used this symbol and spoke of the absolute need to circumcise the heart. The teacher was referring to an interior transformation which the People must make and which would affect the centre of believers (Deut. 18:16).

Prophets insistently urged the People to a thorough renewal and repentance. Their oracles of judgement indicated how doubtful they were that the People would listen. They used various types of images. An image used by Jeremiah within a collection of oracles about repentance (Jer. 3: 1-4: 1) probably from the Deuteronomic tradition was the circumcision of the heart. Jeremiah used vivid imagery. He wrote, 'Break up the fallow ground and do not sow among thorns' and "circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskin of your heart" (Jer. 4: 3b-4a). They were to remove all obstacles which prevented genuine submission to God's will. Paul inherits this image (Rom. 2: 29; Phil. 3: 3). Joel adds his voice, "Even now says the Lord, return to me... (Joel 2: 12-13). Ezekiel calls the People to "get a new heart and a new spirit" (Ez. 18: 31).

Yet God is Faithful

The prophetic traditions return again and again in the midst of the terrible images of Divine judgment to the Divine statements of an unwavering and permanent fidelity and, assertions about his rocklike steadfastness in love and mercy and his eternal covenantal loyalty. We have such rich image as the husband and wife relationship and the Noah story (Is 54); Father and son relationship (Ho. 11: 1-9); the mother and her new-born child (Is. 49: 14-16); the God whose delight is clemency (Mic. 7: 18-20); the cypress tree and its permanent greenness ...

Readers will have their own significant texts. I mention a few: "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you ..." (Is. 54: 10); Hosea's God's pregnant self description: "I am like the ever green cypress ..." [Hos. 14: 8]; the fine text of Joel with its accumulation of epithets to describe his God [Joel 2: 13].

God must Act

Within the prophetic writings there grows an ever more

explicit realization that more is needed. They explicitly state that only God can really transform and recreate his People. According to Jeremiah God says, "I will restore health to you and your wounds I will heal (Jer. 30:17—note the graphic description of the incurable wounds 30:12-15). There are many and diverse ways in which the prophets describe the restoration and recreation of the People (the reunion of the North and South; a new and noble king; new shepherds; the sheep-shepherd image; a re-affirmation of the Covenant, using the classical covenantal formula and the establishment of a new covenant (Hos. 2:23; Ez. 11:20; 14:11; Ch. 16:59-63; Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Ez. 37:26). Another theme which recurs is the divine promise of that powerful and reassuring presence of God expressed in terms like "I will be with you" (Ez. 34:30) — this presence embodied in an ideal future king, Immanu-el or in other ways like God's glory which returns to the new temple of Ezekiel.

A particular theme is God's inner recreation of each member in the Covenant community. An important tradition attached to Jeremiah's theology described the transformation in terms of "I will put my laws [Torah] within them, I will write it upon their hearts (Jer. 31:32). The consequences will be the creation in a new way of the fundamental covenantal relationship, "I will be their God and they will be my People" (31:33). The tradition of inner renewal in terms of marital fidelity found in Hosea addresses the same problem of perennial infidelity. Such infidelity can be healed only by a recreative act of God, pictured as a new period in which Israel will again fall in love with God through another desert experience. This will be followed by the renewal of marriage bonds (Hos. 2:14-15, 12:6-13, 19-23). God again lavishes his gifts upon his chosen People, the gifts necessary for Covenant loyalty. They become again "My People".

In one of the great confessions of sin, the sinner unhesitatingly admits the depth of sin and its ravages (Ps. 51:3-5), pleads for forgiveness and asks God to effect inner recreation (51:7-12). Heart surgery is essential. He prays, "create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10), and "teach me wisdom in my secret heart." (Ps. 51:7).

Ezekiel and his tradition, bridging the period prior to the final Exile, the Exile and the return, pays particular attention to the

quality of the required renewal. He is acutely aware of the history and depth of sin and its ravages, the permanency of the wounds of sin and God's utter and profound disappointment (Ez Chs. 16,23). He approaches the reality of interior transformation and recreation with his parable of dry bones. The re-united lifeless skeletons wait for the creative breath of God (37:1-14). His other reflection is conditioned by his description of Israel's sinfulness as gross pollution. The purification of the People is followed by an inner renewal described in these terms, "A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put in you and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ez 36:26. cf. 11:19-20). The climax of the recreation is the divine promise, "I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes... (Ez 36:27. cf. 11:20). This rich tradition of the consciousness of the need of divine recreation accompanied by the reality and awareness of the depths of sinfulness could be further developed. This will serve as a background to our study of the major component of Paul's theology of the Spirit.

Indian Awareness / Traditions

As I do not have the competence to develop this point I will just make some comments which will evoke and suggest and allow readers from their own experience and knowledge to develop the point. The great teachers have been aware of the presence of fundamental obstacles to the full flowering of the human person [community]. These obstacles are identified in terms of *maya* [illusion], desire, *samsara*, *avidya* (ignorance)...The sages taught the ways and paths to freedom from the basic obstacles and the means to attain the goal of human life in terms of *moksha*, *nirvana* ...The *avatars*, the great myths, the *margas*, the Eight Fold way and all that is included in *Dharma* are aids on the journey to true wholeness. There is in most traditions a deep awareness that all human striving arising from the inner being of a person, must be accompanied by the grace of the Ultimate. *Arjuna* must fulfill his Dharma and yet he must keep his gaze on the lotus feet of the Lord. We need to be aware of the great phenomena of the human religious quest and its expressions conditioned by concrete and culturally conditioned belief systems and world views. There is a common experience that the human person and community must make a journey from and out of brokenness and the great journey to wholeness.

Contemporary Jewish Experience

Again we only suggest and point. Within Jesus' religious world the Qumran community, the movements related to the Pharisees and the movement initiated by John the Baptist are all concerned with renewal, submission to the will of God and the hope of a culminating saving act of God. John the Baptist as he is presented by the Gospels, speaks of a future figure who will baptize with the Spirit of God and fire, both symbols of final and radical renewal and transformation.

Saul belonged to that tradition which by a process of clarification and interpretation had built a protective wall around the written Torah by the oral Torah. His pursuit of holiness was marked by a conscientious commitment to the minutiae of the two Torahs since such dedicated obedience would bring about the salvation of Israel. He underwent no crisis of conscience nor any crisis in his religious life. However his world changed with his new experience of the God of his ancestors who had set him apart before he was born (Gal. 1:15-16). We turn now to the great story of God's love shown to all in Jesus Christ.

2. God's Action in Jesus Christ

The reflections and survey we have made form a background for our study of the Spirit in Paul's theology. We need to outline briefly his understanding of what God has done in and through Jesus Christ. The determinative factor in his theology is his understanding of Jesus Christ and specifically his death and resurrection within God's saving plan. He had within Judaism a rich, developed and complex vision rooted in centuries of faith interpretation of God as savior. The chosen People had an essential role. The Torah, the religious vision of the prophets, a rich prayer tradition and the sacrificial system and the Temple mediated God's saving presence and the obligations of the Covenant.

His religious world was shattered by God when he uncovered the mystery of his presence in history in the way that only God can act. His religious experience was a distinctive example of normative and creative religious experience. God revealed to Paul that the man whom he had judged to be a blasphemer, cursed by God and justly crucified was the Son of God (Gal 1:16)³.

3. Son of God is often understood in a too physical and literal manner. It is often understood in the sense of the second person of the Trinity. This is a

This experience is unpacked or spelt out in different ways. The God, whom his whole tradition affirmed to love his People, had expressed his saving love in an exhaustive manner in the death of Jesus. God who alone can justify, forgive, sanctify, atone and reconcile has actually done this in a universal, ultimate, permanent and never to be repeated way in and through Jesus' death. The resurrection of the Lord was the indication of this reality. All the prior actions of God were shadows of this mystery. The great theme of the foundational promise to Abraham had found its realization in Jesus Christ. The creation story began again with him since he was the second Adam. The whole of God's atoning activity mediated through the sacrificial system found its culmination in Jesus Christ. The Torah had been replaced. The hope of final transformation and recreation to be found in various streams of apocalyptic theologies were fulfilled in him. All the divine promises which made up the great threads of the faith journey of Israel have become a reality in him.⁴

The Transformation of the Human

Using categories from his religious tradition Paul describes the character and quality of the transformation God effected in the believing community. The believing community is changed either through various new relationships to God the Father, forms of union with Jesus Christ or through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. I will not develop this point.

The Question of Obedience

The transformation of the believer leaves a major problem. How to ensure that the believer will be obedient to God's will? Related to this is the question about the final goal of human life. How to ensure that the believer will be found "blameless" on the day of the Lord (Phil. 1: 10) and share fully in the total newness to be gifted in union with the risen Lord? [Phil. 3: 20-21]. In Galatians Paul succinctly spells out the journey: "For through the Spirit by

special term in Paul and has a symbolic meaning. At the beginning of Hebrews we find an example of this meaning. Having spoken through all types of great religious figures, finally God speaks / acts through his Son. The Son symbolised the unique and ultimate gift, the one who exhausts all possibilities, the eschatological and universal revelation of God.

4. I have recently developed this theme in an article: "Jesus Christ in God's Plan, Interreligious dialogue, Theology of Religions and Paul of Tarsus" VJTR 61 (1997) 742-756.

faith we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness" [Gal. 5:5]. He continues: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor the lack of circumcision counts for anything, the only thing that counts is faith working through love" [Gal. 5:6]. This leads us to trace the major stages in Paul's theological thought in Romans.

From Universal Sin to Universal Justification

He establishes the universal reality of sin. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The affirmation of the universality of sin does not flow from a logical analysis of experience. The death and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God through which God reveals his saving activity demands that Jesus' death atones for all sin and that all are sinners. There can be no other way in which God's saving action is mediated to all [cf. Gal. 2:21]. The death of Jesus as the obedient Son gave Paul a deeper and more universal awareness of sin and human sinfulness. His own tradition had a great sensitivity to human sinfulness.

He grasped that the forgiveness of sin (justification, reconciliation, redemption ...) is only mediated through the death (and resurrection) of Jesus Christ. I am not concerned here with the way believers, be they of the Christian communities or other religions, experience and make their own the forgiveness God effects through Jesus Christ for all. Paul underlines and emphasizes the utter gratuity of God's action, of the unique role of Jesus' death and resurrection and the universality of God's action by his emphasis on the single and essential requirement of faith.

In Jesus Christ's death God wiped out and forgave the sin of all, spanning all history. God has also sown the seed and given all human persons the hope of the full unfolding of the implications of this initial and transforming gift. His love for all while we were sinners and Jesus' death [Rom. 5:6-11] and the gift of the Spirit [Rom. 5:5] are the symbols of this hope.

The graciousness and gratuitous initiative and commitment of God embrace all without exception [Rom. 1:16-17]. Paul affirms this when he tells the story of Adam and all humans and contrasts this story with the story of God's utter graciousness and Jesus' obedience with their universal effects [Rom. 5:12-21]. There is a new Adam story.

The Believers' Responsibility

Having told the story of universal human sinfulness [1: 18-3: 20], the story of God's universal saving act in Jesus crucified, the one obedient man and the initial transformation available as gift to all who believe [Rom. 3: 21-5: 21], Paul begins to pay attention to the story of the on-going lives of the believers. This story in its skeleton form is the story of believers who are faced with the choice of living their lives "alive to God" or alive to the self and dead to God (6:1-21). The initial step is exhortative. He affirms and re-affirms the new mode of the believers' existence consequent upon their fundamental union with the mystery of Jesus' death (the rupture with sin) and resurrection (a new way of life with the hope of future resurrection [6: 1-10]).

In a rather repetitive manner he hammers home the message that careless sinfulness, a compromising option, an indulgent attitude to destructive passions are absolutely incompatible with their union with Christ. The basic option is between God and the 'self' (flesh) and consequently life or death (6:14-23 and 7:1-6). We need to be aware that Paul echoes the rich ethical traditions and expectations of his Jewish heritage and the great themes of the covenantal way of life. He transposes this tradition into the story of God's revealing and saving action in and through Christ and its consequences.

Yet more is Required—Human Frailty

Well motivated exhortation is inadequate to achieve his purpose. He must still confront another element and delve deeper. Exhortation and a code of conduct for a person united to Christ will not ensure that the believer lives as a person "dead to sin and alive to God" (Rom 6:10). He must face the problem all his great religious ancestors have faced. All the oracles of the prophets, the experiences of judgment and great calamities did not effect much change. The Torah and its continued clarification, adaptations and interpretations, being honed to respond to new situations and problems has ultimately not changed the story of human disobedience. We could note that the Catholic Church and all Christian denominations continue a process of exhortations and instruction. Preparing for the Jubilee there are many programs for the renewal of Christian life. Our experience teaches us that exhortation even with sanctions and threats does not transform the human.

The Story of Sin and Death and the Torah

Therefore he returns to the basic religious problem and experience. He reflects within the context of the Torah, his religious belief system and its ethical codes. His reflections are true with regard to all belief systems and ethical codes. The problem is the pervasive and dominating power of evil within the human community and more specifically within the individual human heart whatever be the guidance given by great religious geniuses. He faces this universal experience as experienced within the particular type of the Judaism he inherited and lived. He considers the basic human experience, bracketing God's presence and action within history and the human heart. He reflects on the human person (the "I" of Rom 7:7-26], the belief system [Torah] and the fundamental human obligation to be submissive to God. God and his grace and the Christ event are kept in brackets. This leads him to the human desperate cry of despair in the face of the singular and excruciating awareness of the inner rupture and sense of religious/ethical impotence. He shouts: "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death [the human person destined inevitably to condemnation and death]?" [Rom 7:24].⁵ We could find similar cries in other religious traditions. Paul names the destructive power enslaving and dominating the human person [flesh/body] as *Sin* and *Death*.⁶ The usual "remedy" prescribed would be a *sadhana*, a *marga*, a new clarification or intensification of Torah observance, a movement of renewal, a new code of laws...The goal is surely obedience. However, all "Torahs" are outside the human while evil is deeply embedded within the human. Paul does not see evil as an evil spirit, a devil...He does not speak about sin in our terms of original sin, structural or social sin. He does describe a similar reality. The power of Sin and its corrupting and cancerous presence continually prevents human obedience. As mentioned above Paul describes the situation prior to the Christ event and with God's grace bracketed. However, he also insists that the power of sin and its effects in the human person [flesh] continues to be a threat after justification. This can be seen in his

5. We just note that the "I" of Romans 7: 7-26 does not refer to Paul and some crisis in his life. He reflects on the human situation using a rhetorical 'I'.

6. Death is not only physical death but also the permanent alienation and separation from God. Both terms are personified. The use of *avidya*, *maya* ... would be similar.

exhortations in 6:12-21 and in 8:5-13. He urges Christians: "Do not let Sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions" [6: 12] and "the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God" [8: 7]. To describe the human situation Paul uses the term *nomos* in a number of senses. Constant human experience he names a "law" [7: 21]. The basic positive orientation of the "mind" and another basic contrary orientation are both called a "law" [7: 22]. Sin and Death, dictatorial powers he calls "the law of Sin and Death" [7:22, 25; 8:4]. All these laws are within or can act within the human. He also refers to the Law of God [7:21, 25] and to the Law (Torah) not fully synonymous with the Law of God.

The controlling and determinative power of Sin ["the law of Sin"] is within the human ["in my members" or "in the flesh", namely the human person as enslaved by sin]. The Torah and all belief systems [with their teaching, rites, rituals, ethical codes ...] are outside and are rendered impotent before the overwhelming power of indwelling Sin [8: 3]. Obedience remains impossible.

God Sent His Son ...

As Israel's great prophetic leaders had realized God himself and only God can handle this hopeless human situation. Paul agrees. His major statement is: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me [the "I" of 7: 7-25] free from the law of Sin and Death" [8: 2]. This statement has to be set within the broad framework of God's saving action as it is expressed in this context. The core of the problem is Sin's power and dominion as experienced in the "flesh" and the ineffectual nature of Torah faced with Sin. God sent his only Son into the middle of the mess. The Son comes "in the likeness of sinful flesh". In the death of the Son, described as a sin offering, God condemns Sin itself. The prophets spoke of God forgiving sin and cleansing the People. Paul interprets God's action in Jesus' death as breaking the very power of Sin or ending Sin's reign [8: 3]. Where the Torah Covenant was powerless God acted. In another letter Paul states: "For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin" [2 Cor. 5: 21]. In Romans Paul does not develop the second aspect of God's action which is Jesus' resurrection in which Jesus becomes the "life-giving Spirit" [1 Cor. 15:45; cf. Rom. 4:25].

Earlier Paul described how through the blood of Jesus God had expiated sin and gifted believers with righteousness [Rom. 3: 23-25]. In Corinthians the above quoted passage continues, "so that in him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God" [2 Cor. 5: 21]. Earlier in Romans Paul stated that "Christ was raised for our justification" [4: 25]. In this present text the consequence of God's action regarding his Son's death is the gift of the Spirit which both coincides with the gift of righteousness [Rom. 8:4] and, as we shall see, empowers the believer to live as righteous person.

3. The Empowering Spirit

We return to the major statement [8: 2]. It must be interpreted in the light of the phrases "those who are in Christ Jesus" [8: 1], "Christ is in you" (8: 10) and "in Christ" (8: 2). Believers are united to Christ in such an interior and invisible manner that Paul could state that "it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2: 20) or "Christ is in you" and the believer is "in Christ". Their existence is transformed from within in ways we can never really fathom. Through this union with Christ they are united with the Spirit. He describes this in numerous ways.

In the context of the dominating and destructive power of Sin and Death, union with Christ through faith means that the Spirit becomes the new and more powerful dominating power (Law) which has broken the domination of Sin and set the believer ("you") free. He or she is now in a new sphere of influence, "in the Spirit" and no longer "in the flesh". The Spirit can be said to dwell in the believer (8:9) where as earlier Sin dwelt in the flesh. The indwelling of Sin has given way to the indwelling of the Spirit. This change of indwelling is crucial.

God has not only broken the power of Sin by the sacrificial death of his Son, but has also ensured that the believer, gifted with the Spirit is enabled to fulfil his will (the requirement of the Law (8: 4). This happens because believers, gifted with righteousness, can "walk according to (under the dominion of) the Spirit (8:4). This is the first great gift and the initial and more important consequence. They are able to set their minds (heart) on the will of God and please God (8:7). Their lives can be described by the basic contrasting possibilities- "to live according to the flesh" and "to be hostile to God" and reap death or to live

according to the Spirit, submit to God and please him and reap life and peace (8: 5-8). Obedience is now a distinct possibility while before the saving act of God and the gift of the Spirit it was finally an impossibility (Rom 7:7-8:4). To live according to the "flesh" (the human dominated by indwelling Sin) and according to the Spirit (the human indwelt by the Spirit) are two diametrically opposed ways of life. Believers must allow the Spirit to be the dynamic and inner power in their lives. They are to "put to death the deeds of the body/flesh by the power of the Spirit" (8:12-13. cf. Gal 5:16-17. 25).

The law of the Spirit has both set the believers free and also enabled them to obey God. The Spirit ought to be continually the dynamic inner power guiding Christian life, producing the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5: 16-17. 22-22) and guiding the freedom gifted to the believer (Gal 5: 13-15). These ideas are briefly spelt out in Romans (8:1-14) and in more specific detail in Galatians (5:1-26). The Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9) cements the bond to Christ and is the new inner principle for a Christ-like life, a life which is appropriate for believers united so intimately with Christ. The fundamental ethical dilemma finds its answer in the gift of the Spirit. Though Paul exhorts believers to be guided by the Spirit, to live under the dominion of the Spirit yet he does not indicate clearly how this is to be done. We shall return to this point after discussing the second dilemma.

Shall our Hope Disappoint us?

The Spirit enables the believers to journey in obedience, walking under the influence of the Spirit. However is the journey ultimately a futile journey? Paul pays great attention to this question in Romans. Again we are dealing with a fundamental human question. This is a major theme in Paul's treatment of the Spirit. The question is related to another pair of contrasting terms and realities, condemnation/death and life/resurrection. Obedience and submission to God or "being alive to God" and disobedience and being slaves to sin with the consequences of righteousness and life or death dominate the reflections from 5:12-8:39. He summarises this theme at one point stating: "For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). Sin, flesh and death and the Spirit, obedience and life are the opposed realities.

The Spirit not only enables a consistent ethical life in which the believer is "alive to God" (6:10) or "is enslaved to God" and "righteousness" (6:22.18) and submits to God's love (8:7) but also the Spirit is the pledge of eternal life (8:10-27).

Paul mentions the Spirit for the first time when he opens his discussion of Christian hope (Rom 5:1-10). The Spirit is the reassurance of God's love and fidelity to those who have been justified and reconciled to God in and through Christ's death (5:5; 5-11). God's love is perpetually gifted in abundance in the person of the Holy Spirit (see perfect tense of the verb "pour out" (5:5). This gift is placed at the core of the believer's being ("in the heart" (Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 1:22). The Spirit is the certain reassurance of the hope to "share in the glory of God" (5:2). All fell short of the glory of God because of their sinfulness (3:23). The ultimate gift to all will be the full restoration of the glory of God (8:28). This glory of God is restored when believers receive the full reality of their "being children of God ("sonship") and heirs with Christ [8:17]. The glory of God also can be described in terms of the "redemption of our bodies" and "to be conformed to the image of his Son," the first born of a large family" (8:16, 17). Those who belong to Christ [1 Cor. 5:23] will be glorified with Christ [8:17]. This same reality is described in Philippians: "He [Christ] will transform the body of humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself" [Phil 3:21]. Romans explicitly explains the relationship between the Spirit and our final destiny. [cf. 2 Cor 3: 18].

The Story of Death and of Life

The story of Death originating in the sin of Adam and the new story of life rooted in God's graciousness and the obedience of the man Jesus Christ [Rom. 5: 12-21] pervade the reflections from chapter five to chapter eight. The Spirit is at the centre of the story of the gift of eternal life. Having introduced the theme in verse 5:5 Paul draws attention to it again in the context of slavery and the threat of sin and death when he states that the believer belongs to a new era and world. They are "slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit [7: 6]. This is developed, as we saw above in the next Chapter.

In the way Paul tells the story of God's action in our human history the Spirit is related to God as "the Spirit of God" (remember that God in Paul is also an abbreviation for God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ)...and to Christ as the "Spirit of Christ" (8:9). The Spirit is linked to God's act of raising Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11). The Spirit is linked to the risen Jesus who became a "spiritual body" and a "life giving spirit" [1 Cor. 15: 41-49; cf. Rom. 1:4]. His presence within the believers and their union with him is inseparable from the indwelling of the Spirit [Rom. 8: 9b-10]. In his reflections Paul is able to pass from "in the Spirit" to "the Spirit of God dwelling in you", from "to have the Spirit of Christ" to "to belong to him (Christ)" or "Christ in you" and finally to "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead who dwells in you" and "to his Spirit who dwells in you" [8:9-11].

The believer is mortal and destined to death because of sin [5: 12, 17; 8: 10]. However because of Christ's inner presence and the gift of righteousness given by God through the dynamic inner activity of the Spirit [8:4], the abiding gift of the indwelling Spirit is the pledge of eternal life [8: 10, 13]. He explains this assurance by asserting that God who raised Christ by his Spirit will also give life to the mortal bodies of believers through his indwelling Spirit [8: 11]. Earlier Paul had contrasted the universal story of death caused by Adam's trespass with the amazing story of life linked to God's extra-ordinary graciousness and the one man Jesus Christ [5:17-18. cf. 1 Cor 15:20-22]. We need to read the story told in 5:12-21 together with the same story told again in 8:1-4. 9-11. In the earlier story the emphasis was on Christ's career (5: 15-20). In the second story the emphasis is on the career of the believers who live united with Christ and under the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Story of Slaves becomes the Story of Children of God

The contrasting terms are "slaves" and "sons" (children). The indwelling Spirit creates a filial (familial) reality and ends the long story of slavery. The Spirit enables the believers to give expression to this reality from the depths of their being ("our spirit") in the prayer, "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:14-16). He draws out the consequences in terms of their being heirs, destined to "be glorified with him" provided they share his sufferings (8:17). In Galatians Paul has a similar reflection within the context of believers who had been slaves and became children of Abraham and heirs

according to the primal and universal promise made to Abraham [Gal 4:4-7. 3:15-29]. The gift of the Spirit is an integral part of the event of Christ's liberating death and the eschatological promise of blessing made to Abraham [Gal 3:6-14]. The Spirit is also active as the believer waits from the full blossoming of the gift of righteousness [Gal 5: 5].

The Spirit as First Fruits and Pledge

The Spirit is also described by Paul as the "first fruits" pointing to the gift of the full reality of sonship [children of God] and the redemption [full recreation] of the believers [our bodies]. This harvest image of the Spirit is re-expressed in a commercial term *arrabon* — "first installment,"⁷ down payment, guarantee [2 Cor 1:22; 5:5 cf. Eph 1:14].

The Intercessory Spirit

The indwelling Spirit which gifts righteousness [obedience] and which is to be the dynamic and determinative power in the believers' ethical life is therefore also the guarantee of the fullness of life. This Spirit also directs the believers' inner being to yearn for the fulfillment of the promised hope [8:26-27]. Like Christ who is an intercessor [8:34] the Spirit creates a profound restlessness in the believer and has a consequent intercessory role. The reason is that believers do not know [namely they have not experienced] nor can they imagine what is the final blossoming of God's saving plan [8:24-26]. They do not know what prayer to make which would be according to God's ultimate purpose. However the Spirit in their deepest recesses "groans" in an inexpressible way. God, searcher of the heart where the Spirit dwells and knowing the inner recesses of the Spirit will respond with the gift of eternal life. This is another very reassuring basis for Christian hope.⁷ Paul makes no reference to the Spirit when he develops the basis for hope from the perspective of the unimaginable and utterly reliable love of God and Jesus Christ [8:32-39.] This story of love was also told earlier as an assurance of hope [5:5-11.]. That very love of God which came to expression in Jesus Christ

7, Often this text is misunderstood. This is not related to normal prayer nor to some type of prayer described as the Spirit praying within a person. This is the great eschatological prayer of the Spirit giving expression to the deepest purpose of God for the human person and the deepest reality of the human person who is to share fully in the glory of God.

and remains as the final revelation of God is poured into our hearts in the gift of the Spirit.

The Two Great Human Questions

The great human dilemmas concern the journey of life and the goal of that journey. Human experience tells us of human frailty, selfishness, ignorance, passion ... There is the story of sin and human impotence. Therefore there is also that inner and profound and at times crippling fear that the journey will end in tragedy and destruction or that it is meaningless. The Jewish story as told in the OT is a story of gross infidelity and successive experiences of tragedy. The great symbol of this was the Exile of 587 and the continued state of domination by other nations. The symbols of infidelity were the interrelated realities of idolatry and many forms of injustice [Faith-Justice reality].

The prophets, wisdom teachers and Judaism and its various movements sought answers to human sinfulness and for the basis of hope that the journey of life for Israel and individuals would be successful. A major concern was how to ensure that the Day of the Lord was a day of joy.

Within a Jewish world view and religious tradition Paul faces the two dilemmas of human sinfulness and the consequent danger of condemnation and the despair about ultimate destiny. He depended upon the Torah Covenant. He both re-interprets the story and tells a new story. The core of the new story is God's fidelity to himself, his love and utter graciousness. In the death of his obedient Son the power of Sin is broken, believers are gifted with a new and basic relationship with God and the inner power of the Spirit which will enable them to live in obedience. The prophetic hopes and promises of a recreated heart, a new spirit and the gift of God's Spirit have been realised in a manner that no prophet could have hoped. The prayer of the psalmist is answered. The gift of the Spirit of life is God's answer to our basic human dilemma.

The same Spirit is the Spirit of the risen Christ and the God who raised Christ from the dead. The Spirit is not only the reassurance of our final destiny. The Spirit acts in the deepest levels of human person to effect this final transformation. The Day of the Lord will be a day of everlasting joy. All believers

will share again in the glory of God and be conformed to the image of the Son.

4. The Spirit and the New Community

How to Surrender to the Spirit

We have postponed this question. Writing to the Galatians Paul exhorts them, "live by the Spirit" and "let us also be guided by [be in step with] the Spirit." He tells the Roman community, "...if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live." He never explains as far as I know the way to surrender to the dynamic power of the indwelling Spirit.

An initial step would be to have the faith conviction that the Spirit of God and Christ actually dwell in the deeper levels of our person. We are temples of the Spirit. The Spirit can only be present at the core of the person and once given remains a dynamic element [1 Thess 4:8—note the present participle; Gal 3:5] unless the basic relationship with God is severed. I would think that many believers are at least insufficiently aware and inadequately understand the presence of the Spirit. To that extent they are also unconvinced of the depth of the Christian's union with Christ and the Spirit and the interior and existential presence of Christ and the Spirit within them. There is a smouldering fire of energy covered with layers of ash, namely theological ignorance, little faith conviction, indifference to and fear of this power. Christ and the Spirit like God so often are imagined as outside of us and we related to them as "outsiders". The knowledge and awareness of the whole dimension of the interiority of Christ and the Spirit is often quite minimal.

We not only need this awareness of the wonderful reality of Christian existence created by the familial relationship to God as Father, the special union with the risen Lord and the Spirit. We also must be aware of our radical need of the power and guidance of the Spirit. The need of the power of the gifting God (grace) is the need of the Spirit. This leads to the place of deliberate prayer to the Spirit in Christian life.

Paul describes another aspect in this process of surrender to the Spirit. However he does not refer to the Spirit in the text [Rom 12:1-2]. As the background to his long parenthesis in Romans [12:1-15:14] he tells the community: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so

that you may discern what is the will of God" [12:2]. Believers need a growing awareness of the value system of this "world" and God's value system which is found in the teaching of Jesus and an inner conviction that diametrically opposed ways of life are involved. They must be convinced of the need of radical renewal of the "mind" and also the need to be equipped in order to discern the will of God. Anyone familiar with the dynamic of the Exercises of St. Ignatius will recognise here the purpose of his "Second Week Exercises" and the graces of this week. What follows from this reflection is that the Spirit effects the radical renewal and enables and guides the process of discernment. How to respond to the moulding and guiding of the Spirit?

The openness and surrender to the Spirit is an important aspect of the basic faith relationship to God the Father. To make this faith surrender to God means a growing commitment to God who makes a self-gift of himself in and through the Spirit whose presence within is his own dynamic self-gift. A personal relationship to the Holy Spirit is part of a genuine and maturing Christian life. This leads us to the major point.

The major aspect is the need for a particular type of prayer and manner of life. The believer needs to effect a conscious and deliberate opening of the deeper self, to grow in personal awareness of it and to surrender it in silence and growing openness to the activity of the Holy Spirit who dwells within the deeper self. The believer needs that type of prayer which "releases" the Spirit. He/ she needs a prayer which opens the deeper self to his/ her powerlessness, frailty, fear, sinful orientations, and hopelessness and in which she/he surrenders the broken self and allow the dynamism of the Spirit of holiness to heal, mould and guide. We turn now to the diverse aspects of Paul's understanding of the Spirit.

The Spirit as the Foundational and Primary Gift

There will be some repetition in this section. In various limited contexts in response to particular problems Paul describes the effects of God's gracious action with regard to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The sinner is justified, the enemy is reconciled, the slave freed or redeemed, sin is expiated, slaves become children... All this happens through faith which establishes a profound bond to God through union with Jesus Christ. The primary gift associated with this whole Christ event is the gift of

the Spirit of God, a gift inseparable and essential for the final era [eschatological age]. We have seen this in detail in Romans. We shall briefly describe some other contexts in which this is stated. The gift which coincides with the Galatians' acceptance of the Gospel of the crucified is the Holy Spirit who is the concrete expression of the blessing promised to Abraham (Gal. 3: 1-5: 14). The Spirit⁸ is also the gift which coincides with the transition from a slave state to the state of being sons / daughters and heirs (Gal. 4: 4-7). The Corinthians are reminded that they are "God's Temple" and that the Holy Spirit dwells in them and within each of them (1 Cor. 3: 16; 6: 19; Eph. 2: 22). The Spirit is associated with Jesus Christ who effects their initial purification, sanctification and justification (1 Cor. 6: 11).

The Foundational Role of the Spirit to Create Unity in Diversity

The initiation rite which creates the community, breaking down the socio-religious barriers and uniting the many into one body is the moment the believers are gifted with the Spirit who creates this communion (1 Cor 12:12-13). In Galatians this communion is created by union with Christ (Gal 3: 27-28).

The writer of Ephesians has a similar type of reflection. A text I liked for a long time describes how Christ by his death has reconciled Jews and Gentiles to God (Eph 2:13-22). He broke down the wall of hostility in his body and created a new humanity. The writer pictures Jews and Gentiles entering the temple of God. Through Christ and united in the Spirit and by the Spirit they all have equal and unhindered access to the Father (Eph 2:18). The Spirit is also a dynamic partner as he creates of all believers one temple whose foundation stone is Christ (Eph 2: 21-22). In the midst of diversity of role and responsibilities the Spirit creates the unity of the Body of Christ (Eph 4:3-4). In the context of many types of division and conflicts in the modern Church, divisions caused by race and caste, social and economic status, different theologies, different ritual traditions, forms of theological colonialism,... the role of the Spirit in the renewal of the Church at the threshold of the new century becomes a pressing reality. We shall continue our study of the foundational role of the Spirit.

8. Throughout we have avoided using impersonal words to refer to the Spirit. Therefore there is a constant repetition of the noun.

Further Foundational Roles

The foundational faith profession which is enunciated in terms of "Jesus is Lord" can only be made under the influence of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:2). In a more apologetic context Paul describes the basic aspect of Christian existence and perhaps initiation (2 Cor 1:21-22). He relates God's action of establishing the believers' union with Christ, his taking possession of them (anointing and sealing) in the gift of the Spirit. This Spirit is also the pledge of their ultimate and total union with Christ and God. We note this same idea in the middle of a long exhortation (Eph 4: 25-5:2). The writer urges, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30). In a text we have not introduced from Romans Paul summarises his Gentile mission in sacrificial terminology. The Gentiles become an acceptable offering to God by the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13). As the climax of his hymn of blessing and the incorporation of the Gentile world ("you") into the body of Christ the author of Ephesians succinctly states what is a Pauline theme. He writes: "In him (Christ) you, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:13-14). The Spirit is the foundational gift and the pledge of the future inheritance. The gift of and sealing with the Spirit which incorporates the Gentile believer into the sacred People of God is also interpreted as the fulfilment of the eschatological plan of God.

The foundational aspect of the gift of the Spirit is also clear in the strange and very sarcastic text in which Paul summarises the distortions of the essence of believers' foundational experience. He charges the recalcitrant Corinthians with a readiness to accept from his opponents another Christ, a different Spirit and a different Gospel (2 Cor 11:4). One very rich text associates Christ and the Spirit and another Christ, God and the Spirit (Phil 2:1 and 2 Cor 13:13). In the second text the whole saving work of God is succinctly summarised in terms of God's love which comes to expression in Christ, the source of all God's gifts [grace] and in

fellowship with the Holy Spirit.⁹ The primary nature of the gift of the Spirit is again spelt out in another text involving the action of Christ and God. The gifts, services and works with which believers are endowed at the creation of the community of believers [Rom 12: 3. cf 12:3-8] are gifts of the Spirit, the Lord and God, God being the ultimate source of all [1 Cor 12:4-6].

Before moving to another more difficult text I want to underline that the gift of the Spirit is not only foundational but also affects the deepest reality of the believer. The pregnant phrases "in Christ" and "in the Spirit" as well as the phrase "Christ in you" and "the Spirit indwelling in you" deserve not only our attention but our silent wonder. We are unable to describe the depth of this interior presence and union. We also draw attention to the way the Spirit is so intimately related to the actions of God which take place in and through Christ and the activity of God and Jesus Christ. We have a very vibrant theology of the "Trinity in human history" in Paul which we shall note when we study the Holy Spirit. We now comment briefly on a difficult text.

The New Covenant and the Process of Transformation into the Image of God

In a manner which at times is similar to aspects of this thought in Romans Paul describes the origin, the on-going activity and the final destiny of the community of faith in terms of the activity of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3: 3; 3: 1-18). The background is made up of two aspects of the Jewish story. The first is the story of the Sinai Covenant and the Torah given to Moses, written on stone tablets and also the account of the transfigured face of Moses which he used to veil (Ex. 31: 18, 34: 29-35; cf. 2 Cor. 3: 3, 7, 13). The other aspect is the promise of the New Covenant with its references to the Spirit [Jer. 31:31-33]. Paul compares the Old Covenant written with ink on stone tablets with the New Covenant written with the Spirit on human hearts [cf. also Rom. 7:6]. The first is accompanied by condemnation and death while

9. Readers may wonder why in this great blessing Paul begins with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ". Probably what he has done is to expand his usual final blessing which he formulates in terms of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 16: 23). This blessing took on special meaning for me when I asked some Christian prisoners in Tihar Jail to conclude a Bible and prayer session with a prayer. Christians invited the other Nigerians to say The Blessing. They all repeated this text from Paul.

the other offers gifts of righteousness, freedom, the Spirit and the life. God's gift of Christ and the Spirit inaugurates the New Covenant. The Old Covenant belongs to the desperate and hopeless situation of the human family. The Spirit effects both the release from final condemnation [Rom. 8: 1-2] and death and new possibilities for believers. The new possibility is described as an unhindered gazing at the reflected glory of the Lord [God] and the consequent progressive transformation of the believer who shares ever more in this divine glory. The Spirit of God [Lord]¹⁰ enables and effects this gazing and the consequent transformation [2 Cor. 3: 17-18]. This text is complicated in itself and in its use of imagery. The reinterpretation of the story of Moses' glory and the veil are not meaningful to normal believers today. The text reiterates that the empowering Spirit is a foundational gift of God ["the Lord"] and is at the very core of the Christian experience.

I have developed this point about the foundational nature of the gift of the Spirit because I have become more aware of this in the process of this study and I am sure many are not adequately aware. In this year of renewal and preparation for the Jubilee year the Spirit is the focus of attention of the community of faith.

The Spirit and On-Going Christian Life

We have described the fact that the Spirit is the essential and primary gift to the believer; that the Spirit is the dynamic principle which enables continuous obedience and that the Spirit is the great pledge of our final destiny. We refer to our study of Romans. The Spirit has major roles which enhance the life of the believing community. After the believer becomes a member of the household of faith (Gal. 6: 10) the faith journey is enriched by the continual¹surrender to the action of the Spirit who is the source of the qualities which are expected of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Paul develops this idea in some detail in Galatians, aware of the concrete situation of conflict (Gal. 5: 13-6: 10; cf. 5: 5; 16-18; 22- 26; 6: 1, 7-8). We list the famous fruits of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

10. Authors disagree whether "Lord" in the text refers to God or to Christ and about the apparent identification of the Lord and the Spirit. I judge that Lord refers to God and Paul interprets the scriptural text with its use of "Lord" by stating that the Lord indicates the Spirit of God.

gentleness and self control (5: 22-23). This list and other Pauline lists of qualities and his description of love are representative not exhaustive. Probably the situation in various communities accounts for some of the qualities chosen from available topoi. In all the lists the Spirit, often not mentioned, can be argued to be the source of the qualities.

We can draw out some of the implications from our reading of this text, Paul's earlier comments about love (5: 13-15) in that context (5: 5-6, 16-26) as well as the context into which he places the hymn to love (1 Cor. 13: 4-7). Not only is love the primary characteristic of the believers' life but also the primary fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22; Col. 1: 8). Love is not one among the charisms but is presupposed in the genuine exercise of all the charisms. The Spirit is linked to God's expression of this love (Rom. 5: 5) and to the whole story of Christ's love.

Other Roles of the Spirit

We will look at some more specified roles. Members of the community who are guided by the Spirit [pneumatikoi] are responsible for guiding the erring members of the community (Gal. 6: 1). The Spirit enables them to do this in a gentle and humble way and as an expression of love. Paul develops this passing reference in detail when he instructs the community about the pre-eminence and importance of the role of the non-hierarchical members who are entrusted with the role of prophets (cf. 1 Thess. 5: 19). We shall return to this.

As the Spirit enables the believers to discern that behaviour which is appropriate for those who belong to Christ and live by the Spirit (Gal. 5: 24-25), the Spirit also enables them to fathom the Wisdom of God [1 Cor. 2: 1-16]. The wisdom of God could be described as God's plan of salvation, his value system, the ways he has revealed himself, the hidden mystery of God embodied and enfleshed in all that is involved in Jesus' life, death and resurrection (1 Cor. 1: 21; 2: 7-10). Before developing this point in the Corinthian letter we turn to a great prayer text.

The Spirit and the Eyes of the Heart

In his important prayer for the community, the writer of Ephesians has a rich reflection on the wisdom of God though he does not use this term. In his blessing he has traced the eternal

plan of God and its realisation in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3-14). The accompanying prayer is addressed as is usual to God who is addressed as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory". The grace he wants for them is that God may give them "a Spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him". The Spirit's action is interior because the Spirit enlightens "the eyes of their heart". The primary gift is the inner experience of God active in history. The particular aspects mentioned are his gifts, namely their final inheritance and the goal of their call and God's action in history spelt out in the blessing. The major aspect is the gift to grasp the "immeasurable greatness of God's power which has been revealed in the whole Christ event and in its climax the resurrection, exaltation of Jesus Christ and his universal dominion. Only the Spirit can enable the believer to grasp the inexpressible plan and action of God. Rather than refer to the Wisdom of God (cf however Eph 3: 10), this author and the author of Colossians refer to the plan of God as the mystery of God and the mystery of Christ (Col 1:26-27; Eph 3:4; cf 1 Cor 2:7). This mystery involves not the crucifixion of Christ but the admission of the Gentiles. The Spirit is the teacher of the leaders of the community (apostles and prophets) of this divine mystery and enables to be authentic ministers of this mystery. We do not appreciate the shock for the religious Jew to see all barriers broken down by Christ.

The Wisdom of God and the Spirit

Many aspects of contemporary culture in its diverse expressions and in its specific features, the socialisation of religion in its Christian forms and in diverse regions are quite at odds with the Wisdom of God. We see this throughout the Gospels since Jesus undermines, subverts and challenges socio-cultural and religious values and more basic aspects of world views. Paul had to confront the ways of socio-cultural values which were undermining his Gospel. How does the believer and community of faith discern and distinguish between the wisdom of the world and the Wisdom of God? How to grasp all the concrete ramifications of the Gospel of the crucified Christ in the circumstances of normal life? Paul's answer is the guidance of the Spirit of God. In his first letter to Corinth we watch Paul discern the genuine expression of the Spirit from apparent and yet dangerous or false expressions. The Spirit "searches everything even the depths of God" [1 Cor. 2:10]. Therefore, the Spirit dwelling in the community and

individuals enables them to understand the gifts bestowed ... by God [1 Cor. 2: 12]. The persons gifted with God's Spirit whom Paul calls *pneumatikoi* are able to discern, understand and authentically explain God's Wisdom. What belongs to God's Wisdom he describes as *pneumatika*, spiritual realities. The Spirit teaches both the authentic understanding and the authentic interpretation and the way to articulate it ["spiritual truths in spiritual words"].

A consequence is that the ordinary contemporary person who is not open to the action of the Spirit [*psychikos*] not only does not grasp but judges the Wisdom of God to be foolish and rejects it. Many within the Church among the laity, consecrated men and women and clergy would at times at least belong to the Corinthians whom Paul describes as "people of the flesh", "infants in Christ" and immature. They are Christians more by a process of socialisation than by a process of mature personal commitments, and growing and deeper inner freedom. Paul gives various criteria for his judgement throughout the letter. He refers to dissension, jealousy, quarrels, forming parties [today this would include parties formed along ethnic, ritual, language, caste, social status lines], going to court with other believers rather than suffering personal injustice, allowing "knowledge" to push love into the background, a penchant for the extra-ordinary [tongues, eloquence ...], overlooking the weak, a worldly value system, a negative attitude to the body, sexual promiscuity, the celebration of the Lord's Supper which favours social elite and social insensitivity, ... Saint Ignatius restricts Christians with a particular level of faith maturity, the core of the Spiritual Exercises. He knew from experience what Paul wrote to the Corinthians from his experience with them.

This role of the Spirit is crucial in the community of faith for the community and for its leaders. What happens when leaders within consecrated life, parish life, Dioceses, various types of ecclesiastical curias build on the foundation stone of Christ in hay, straw or wood, that is as *psychikoi* and not as *pneumatikoi*?

The Spirit and the Body-Person

In our contemporary world this is a relevant topic. The ecology of the human body needs great attention as the body is

damaged in so many ways.¹¹ Readers may initially think of sexual promiscuity, then overeating, smoking, overwork, rash driving, inattention to the signs the body gives of its misuse, underestimating the importance of emotions, the rash use of medicine are all aspects of the lack of care and respect for the human body. Paul develops his thought in the context of sexual immorality and the resurrection (I Cor 6: 11-21; Ch 15). The body is essential for all relationships. The Spirit dwells in the believer making the very body temple of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Spirit heightens the dignity of the body. The body-person shares in Christ's resurrection of the body. The body is transformed but not discarded nor devalued. The risen Christ is a life giving spirit and in union with him as risen Lord our bodies become like his. They become "pneumatikon" bodies. Such a body needs to be respected. As sin comes to expression in and through the body so also do all the fruits and gifts of the Spirit. A theology of the body which is the temple of the Spirit and which shares in the resurrection of Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit challenges the negative attitudes towards the body found in Christian piety and the abuses of the body so common in ordinary life.

The Spirit and Paul's Ministry

Some of Paul's comments about the Spirit and his ministry provide hints of the role of the Spirit in ministry. Paul judges himself to be a pre-eminently Spirit-endowed person and therefore to have the "mind of Christ" (I Cor 2:6). However in various critical moments within his ministry he needed not only the prayers of the community but also a new presence, as it were, of the Holy Spirit (Phil: 18-20). The Presence of the Spirit ensured him that he would be faithful to the Gospel and Jesus Christ, whatever be the judgement and outcome.

In his discussion of various questions related to marriage and celibacy, Paul gives his considered opinion. His opinions have the weight of authority because of the type of person he was as a minister of the Gospel and teacher. Discussing the question

11. When Paul uses *soma* he refers to the body-person. He has a holistic anthropology. Various terms are used which refer to an aspect of the human person. He is not dualistic. Therefore I use the term body-person. This signifies the human person from the perspective of the body. Through the body the body-person relates to himself, nature, material reality, to others and to God

of virgins he states, "... I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy" (1 Cor 7: 25). This statement is re-phrased and explained when he takes up the question of the remarriage of widows. He concludes: "and I think that I too have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 7:40). God in and through the Spirit guides Paul in his teaching ministry. The text implies more. The Spirit of God dwells in Paul. He is a pneumatakos. In an emotionally packed text [Rom 9:1-5] he emphatically states that he is not lying. His union with Christ and the indwelling Spirit, who guides his conscience, witness to the truthfulness of his assertions.

In the initial proclamation of the Gospel in various communities [Thessalonica, Galatia, Corinth ...] Paul was empowered with the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit was manifested in the conviction with which he proclaimed the Gospel, the pervasive power of the Gospel, signs and miracles which accompanied his preaching and most of all in the ready acceptance of the Gospel by various types of people [1 Thess. 1: 5; 1 Cor. 2: 1-5; Rom. 15: 18-19]. The new believing communities were also empowered by the Spirit. This was evident in external ways, the power to do miracles, gifts of prophecy and tongues and other gifts [Gal. 3: 1-5; 1 Cor. 1: 5-7] and an extraordinary joy in the midst of suffering which accompanied their conversion [1 Thess. 1: 6].

This manifest presence and dynamic power of the Spirit in his ministry is succinctly described at the end of Romans. He surveys his work over the years explaining "... what Christ has accompanied through me to win the obedience from the Gentiles (cf. 1:5) by work and deed, by power of signs and wonders through the power of the Spirit of God" (15: 19). We note how Christ works through the Spirit of God in Paul. To the Corinthians he describes the sufferings which have characterised his ministry and were the source of scandal to some of them but for him the signs of the authenticity of his mission. He goes on to describe the genuine Christian qualities with which he had lived through all the pain and turmoil (2 Cor. 6: 3-10). In the middle of this list he refers to the empowering presence of the Spirit and power of God (2 Cor. 6: 6-7). The Spirit was an integral part of his ministry.

The Ministry of the Community of Faith and the Spirit

The recurring theme of the Spirit's empowering presence in his own ministry is a special example of the multifaceted presence of the Spirit within the community of faith enabling various

believers to enrich the community and contribute to its mission (1 Cor. 12 and 14). In an instruction about the life of believers Paul described the fruits of the Spirit with which their lives are enriched. The Spirit also enriches the whole community by another cluster of gifts which are essential aspects of a vibrant community of faith and are integral to its existence (Rom. 12: 1-2). They are not reserved to some categories or groups in the ecclesial community. At times "charisms" are more or less restricted to forms of consecrated life and the clergy. I wonder how often the types of work done by clerics in ecclesiastical curias are seen as gifts of the Holy Spirit! For Paul they would be, provided they are rooted in love.

In this context we make some remarks about the crying need in the universal Church and various Local Churches for a foundational model of the Church. It must grow out of that communion which is rooted in the shared and common bonds to God the Father, union with Jesus Christ and the indwelling Spirit and rooted in the universal gifts of faith, hope and love. To this community of faith God has entrusted the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the responsibility to build up the community and witness to God's saving love in the world. All who are entrusted with ecclesiastical roles are first and foremost members of this community of faith and exercise their God given roles as responsible to the community of faith. Responsibility for the ecclesial community can only be an authentic service when the fundamental models for the Church are related to the basic common and shared communion in the life of God. This leads to the need for understanding the role of the lay person in the community of Faith and the multiplicity of gifts, services and workings which need to be recognised, respected, nourished, developed and discerned. The Church in India is almost sinfully clerical and a distortion of the ecclesial communion which is the Sacrament of Jesus Christ and the Temple of the Spirit.

As we listed the fruits of the Spirit we also enumerate the diversity of "the manifestations of the Spirit" given "for the common good" (1 Cor 12: 7). The term "manifestations" is better than charisms and includes the three words Paul uses, charisms (*charismata*=gifts), service (*diakonion*) and workings (*energmaton* [1 Cor 12:4-6]). Readers may be surprised by the wide range of ways the Spirit acts through believers "to build up the Church"

[I Cor 14: 5. 12]. Different translations will use differing terms. The lists include: utterances of wisdom, utterances of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, various kinds of tongues and interpretations of tongues [I Cor 12: 8-10]; apostles, prophets, teachers, deeds of power, gifts of healing, assistance, forms of leadership, types of tongues [I Cor 12: 28] and prophecy, service, teaching, encouraging, contributing to needs of others, leading, showing compassion [Rom 12: 6-8]. As Christian life needs the fruits of the Spirit to be authentic, in the same way the community of faith needs all of these manifestations of the Spirit to be the genuine Body of Christ.

Conclusion

We have come to the end of this broad study of the Spirit at the centre of Christian life. In normal Christian piety and thought Jesus Christ has the centre of the stage. In many ways he takes on the roles of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The study of Paul has shown that he has a very rich theology of the Father, his Son Jesus Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is at the very heart of the community of Faith, the temple of the Spirit who enriches it with a variety and multiplicity of gifts. The Spirit enables the community and her leaders to understand the Wisdom of God and witness effectively to the Gospel of God. The Spirit lives at the heart of the community of Faith and as its heart.

The Spirit is the source of hope for every believer enabling all the sons and daughters of the one Father to live as worthy disciples of Christ and members of his Body. The Spirit dwells in the deepest recesses of the believer and waits for him/her to return so as to continuously liberate him/her from all that dehumanise and to recreate with power, wisdom, love and all other riches. Therefore we can pray: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your divine love.

The Spirit is the primary gift of the Father to all who surrender themselves to him whose love and fidelity, power and graciousness they find in Jesus Christ. Therefore we can pray: Send forth your Holy Spirit, O Lord, and we shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth.

Vidya Jyoti,
Delhi.

Pneumatic Dimension of the New Community according to the Gospels

Augustine Mulloor

The Pneumatic dimension of the new community is evident in the Gospels. Augustine Mulloor brings to focus the various shades of this charismatic aspect of Christian community. Thus, the article expounds on the basis of Gospel texts, how this community is born, is led and sent to give witness and interiorly forced to move to "the whole truth", all in and through the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

It is evident in the prophetic teaching that the messianic community in the O T was essentially related to the Spirit of God. The messianic community is one that experiences the outpouring of the Spirit [Joel 2, 18]. It is the new covenant community on whose heart the new interior law is written [Jer 31, 31f.]. Into this community God put his Spirit [Ez 36, 26]. In the teaching and ministry of Jesus this dimension of the eschatological community is explicitated in the form of fulfillment. This article aims at examining this particular aspect of the Christian community in the context of attempts made to redefine the role of the church in the third millennium. Although the pneumatic dimension pertains to the very foundational experience of the church [Acts 2, 1 f.], in the course of time the institutionalization and further the rationalization covered up the charismatic dimension so that the institutional and theological became more prominent than the spiritual and charismatic. The preoccupation was centred on the security of the institutions. The fossilization was a natural outcome together with stagnation and inertia. The beatification of the stagnant and the fossilized made the condition worse.

Hence we have to accept the challenge to discover the original charismatic character of the church as envisaged by the prophets and realised in the person of Jesus and to restore the charismatic

dynamism in the church making the movement of the Spirit powerful and strong.

Our procedure will consist in reading and reflecting on important texts in the four Gospels that explicitly or implicitly speak of the relationship between the Spirit and the new community.

Community born through the Spirit

The baptism of Jesus is a tradition that is common to all the four Gospels [Mk. 1, 9-11; Mt. 3, 13-17; Lk. 3, 21-22; Jn. 1,29-34]. Christologically it is the moment of the solemn proclamation of the authenticity of the mission of Jesus. It can also be called the inaugural proclamation of the mission of Jesus. The mission of Jesus originates in the Father and it is actualized through the power of the Spirit. Hence the voice from heaven and the descent of the Spirit in the form of dove are very important elements in the narration of Baptism. But parallel to this christological revelation, there is an ecclesiological message in this narration.

In this narration Jesus is not only the Messiah on whom the Spirit of God rests but also the representative of the new Israel. The symbolism of dove is to be interpreted in this direction. Dove as the symbol of the Spirit is never used in the Old Testament, directly. But dove as the representation of Israel has basis in a number of texts especially in Song of Songs 2, 12f: "The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land, the fig tree puts forth its fruits, and the vines are in blossom, they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away, O my dove in the clefts of the rock ...". Symbolically the reference is to Israel in relation to Yahweh in the context of covenant relationship. In fact, Targum has interpreted this text of Song of Songs taking dove as Israel. Now, from this angle the opening of the heavens and the descent of the spirit can be better understood. Through the opening of the heavens the divine intervention in human history is manifested. This is the response of God to the prayer of the people in Is. 64, 1: "Oh that you would tear open the heavens and come down ...". God is definitively intervening salvifically in the life of humanity in the person of Jesus. A new community, the eschatological community is being born at the moment of Jesus' Baptism.

This may be compared to the birth of the old Israel who is taken out of Egypt to the land of promise, now guaranteed definitively through the crossing of the Red Sea. That was the crucial moment of their journey to freedom that made everything else possible. Interestingly, there is a literary relationship between the crossing of the red sea and the narration of Jesus' baptism. The opening of the heavens is articulated with the verb *schizo* (Mk. 1, 10) which means to split, to be divided, to be torn etc. This is the verb used by LXX to refer to the division of the waters in the red sea (*bq'*) [Ex. 14, 21], so that the Israelites could pass through.

This observation is buttressed by the exodus motif present in the Gospel according to Mark manifested in the immediate context of the narration namely, the posterior scene of the temptations in the desert [Mk. 1, 12-13] and the introductory section [1, 2-3] both pointing to the destiny and fate of the new Israel parallel to that of the old.

The conclusion is that in Jesus who is God's anointed the definitive and decisive intervention of God is taking place and that in the same Jesus is typified the very new community resulting from such a divine intervention. This intervention is concretely crystallized in the descent of the Spirit in the form of dove which is also the symbol of the new Israel born through God's power.

Another teaching of Jesus in the Gospel according to John clarifies this point. In the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus categorically states what the nature of the new community is. He says, "unless you are born again, you will not enter the kingdom of God..." (Jn 3, 1-11). To Nicodemus who was confused over what was meant by such a statement, Jesus explains the meaning of the rebirth in terms of a birth from above, through water and the spirit... So the new community consists of those who have been born through the power of God in baptism. Such reborn persons become the possession of the spirit that their very nature becomes unpredictably dynamic. Their character becomes essentially charismatic. When Jesus uses wind as a symbol to explain the nature of a reborn person, there is a play of words. The reborn person is one who has identified himself with God, the wind, the breath of God being a symbol of His very being. Hence what the Evangelist says in the prologue about the new situation of those

who accept or believe in Jesus goes parallel to this: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become the children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh or of the will of man but of God" (Jn 1, 12-13). Becoming the children of God they become the likes of God, their Father. They are so transformed by the Spirit of God that they have divine nature. Jn 7, 37-39 should be read, linking it to this idea of divinization. Jesus says, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." When one receives the Spirit by accepting Jesus, he becomes a vehicle of the Spirit to flow to others or he becomes "Spirit-ual".

A community in which the Spirit of God reigns

When Jesus was accused of having relationship with the prince of the devil, Beelzebul in his casting out devils, Jesus rebuts their arguments showing the contrary effects of such an action on the kingdom of the devil itself. Then he affirms that he is really casting out devil with the spirit of God or finger of God (Mt. 12, 28; Lk. 11, 20). This positive argument of Jesus is very important for understanding the pneumatic dimension of the Christian community. This tradition is found only in Mathew and Luke and not in Mark. "But if it is by the spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Mt.). "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons then the kingdom of God has come to you" [Lk].

Lukan expression "finger of God" may be an attempt to link it to Ex 8, 19. It could be also based on the general concept in the Old Testament that the "finger" "hand" or "arm" of God is symbolic of the active presence of God. So, through the casting out of the devil Jesus manifests that God's Spirit is reigning over the people. Negatively, the evil spirit has no more sovereignty over humanity because it has come under the active influence of the Spirit of God. Hence all those who accept Jesus belong to the community that is under the reign of God's Spirit.

The role of the Spirit in the mission of the community

If Jesus acted on the power of the Spirit, the community that is sent by him with his mission should receive the same spirit

and work with his help. The risen Jesus gives the Spirit manifesting to the disciples thus both the mission and the source of power for fulfilling the same. According to Luke, before the ascension, the risen Jesus appeared to the apostles and promised them the power from on high with which to give witness to Jesus: "You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with the power from on high" [Lk. 24, 48-49]. In John this is more explicit: "Jesus said to them again: Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you". When he had said this he breathed on them and said to them, "receive the Holy Spirit" [Jn. 20, 21-22]. Here there is a perfect parallelism between Jesus' mission and the mission of the disciples. Just as Jesus' mission was from the Father, the source of the mission of the disciples is Jesus. As Jesus was led by the Spirit in the fulfillment of the mission, so also the disciples are led by the Spirit.

This link between the mission and the source of the mission of Jesus and that of the disciples is clear in the narration of the death of Jesus and the piercing of Jesus' side after the death, found only in Jn. The moment of Jesus' death, for John, is the moment of perfect fulfillment of everything planned by the Father. That is why, Jesus knowing that everything has been fulfilled, said, "All is accomplished". Symbolically this is articulated by the last drop of blood flowing from the pierced side of Jesus. On the other side, the death of Jesus is the moment of giving of the Spirit to the disciples or to the community. Hence Jesus says, "I thirst" meaning thereby that he was thirsting to give the Spirit. That is why, Jesus' death is described by the Evangelist as "bowing the head and giving up the Spirit". This is symbolically manifested in the water that flows from the pierced side of Jesus, as the water is the symbol of the Spirit (Jn. 19, 28-34). The conclusion, then is that the mission of the community is to introduce others to this action of the Spirit and this mission can be fulfilled only through the help of the Spirit.

At this point it is relevant to turn to Mt 28, 16-20 where the risen Jesus gives the mission to the eleven. The risen Jesus introduces himself as one who has been given authority over heaven and earth and with that authority sends the eleven to the whole world. The eleven were to go to make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Naturally such a sophisticated Trinitarian formula may not have come from Jesus himself. However, the historical authenticity of the message contained in it cannot be doubted. There is no basis to question its authentic belongingness to the Gospel according to Matthew. The use of the formula with personal reference to the Holy Spirit may not have been part of the liturgy of Baptism in the universal sense; in some quarters probably this formula was being employed for the liturgy of baptism. In fact, this could be a more developed form of the formula used by St. Paul much earlier in 2 Cor 13, 13: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you".

In reference to our subject, it is to be noted that the mission of the new covenant community is to introduce all from all nations into the trinitarian life. This has been revealed in the salvific plan of the Father, brought to fulfillment by the Son especially through his death and resurrection with the help of the Spirit that rested on him and anointed him. Jesus gave this same Spirit to the community as a gift so that in and through him the powerful flow of the life of the Father may be actualised in those who believe in Jesus. So, the divine Spirit is vigorously and forcefully flowing through the community and its role or mission is to initiate others into this river which is equal to helping them participate in the very movement of Jesus. Hence the relevance of the final promise given by the Risen Jesus to the community of his dynamic and vibrant presence parallel to the presence of God in the tent - the shekinah - in the context of the Old Covenant: "And I will be with you till the end of the age" [Mt. 28, 20].

A Community that is guided by the law written in the hearts

In Jn 14-16 we have the final discourse of Jesus in which the mode of presence and mode of action of the Holy Spirit is revealed. The departure of Jesus to the Father is the context of this revelation. The disciples who cannot understand the meaning of Jesus' going away are sad and Jesus asks them to be happy in spite of his departure because he is not going away but will be with them in a new and transfigured way after "going to the Father" i.e., after the death and resurrection. 14, 15-17 is the relevant text: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate,

to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth which the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you and he will be in you".

First of all, the word in Greek used by John to refer to the Spirit is *Parakletos* which implies, "called upon to be by the side of". Hence it is the being of the Holy Spirit to be with Jesus by the side of the disciples to defend them. Jesus, therefore, refers to the Spirit as "another" advocate because he himself is one. The second advocate is characterized by the permanent presence: "to be with you for ever". It is an interior presence: "he will be in you". So these are the two qualities of the new community by whose side the Holy Spirit remains as the advocate: permanence and interiority. They are, in turn, the characteristic marks of the new covenant which God promised to make with the house of Israel and the house of Judah as prophesied by Jer.31,31f ... This is to be complemented with the text from Ezek. 36,26. According to Jeremiah, in the covenant the fidelity is guaranteed by the interior law, the law written in the hearts of the people. According to Ezekiel this interior law is the Spirit of God because God says, "I will put my spirit in them ...". This means that the interiority will be so transformed that there will be a perfect identification between the will of God and the will of the human. This interior consciousness of the will of God will guide them in everything: "... when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, "this is the way, walk in it" [Is. 30, 21].

Jesus' attitude to and teaching on the law very much evidences this quality of the community he envisages. One of the main attitudes of the pharisees which is the subject of stark criticism from the part of Jesus is their over-exaggerated emphasis on the letter of the law and neglect of the interior and spiritual dimension of the same [Mk. 7, 1f; Mt. 12, 1-14; 23, 23; 5, 21-48 etc.]. Paul has reinterpreted this as he has written to the Romans: "But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe ..." [3, 21-22]. "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand ... because God's love has been poured into our hearts

through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us ..." [Rom. 5, 1-5]. Naturally this community walks by the Spirit because "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death ... [Rom. 8, 1f]. "Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not ratify the desires of the flesh ... by contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace ... there is no law against such things ... If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit ..." [Gal. 5, 16-26].

This interior transformation actuated by the new covenant ratified through the self-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is beautifully explained by the author of the letter to the Hebrews, in chapters 9-10. "But when Christ came as the High Priest of the good things, that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent, he entered once for all into the Holy place not with the blood of goats and calves but his own blood thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls ... sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God ..." [Heb. 9, 11-14].

So the new community has a transformed and radically purified interiority or conscience and will be led by the same as its guiding principle. Those led by the spirit are spiritual persons and they have the law of the spirit to guide them. The book of Revelation has depicted the perfect form of this community in its eschatological time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. "...the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the lamb. The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no night there..." [Rev. 21, 22 f.].

Community's witness to Jesus through the Spirit

The new community will have to suffer on account of the Gospel. Suffering is a must and a necessary consequence of the commitment one makes to Jesus and his Kingdom. Authentic witness to Jesus will be possible only in the context of persecution and affliction. The Spirit has an important role to play in this mission of the community to give witness.

In the fourth Gospel once again we should go back to the final discourse of Jesus. One of the modes of action of the paraclete or advocate is explained in connection with the persecution from the part of the world (15, 18-27). 15, 18-25 describes the circumstance in which the Spirit is going to help the disciples to give witness. The description begins saying, "if the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you". The "world" for Jn. in the second part of the Gospel is the sum total of opposition to Jesus who is the revelation of the Father and his revealer. It is in this world that the disciples are to give witness to the revelation in Jesus. This is possible only with the help of the Spirit: "when the advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf." (15, 26).

The Spirit is the Spirit of truth because its source is the Father. Father is the truth and hence His Spirit is identified with his very nature. Jesus is the truth of the Father historically revealed to us (Jn. 14, 6). Hence Jesus himself is the Spirit. When one believes in Jesus and is committed to him, the spirit of truth dwells in him. Only a disciple will be able to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit. This spirit helps him to give witness in the midst of and in spite of the persecutions and oppositions. The inner dynamism of the help given by the Spirit is the following. The spirit gives to the believer the interior conviction that the suffering he undergoes at present is a temporary experience and that the victory the opponents and enemies are now celebrating is only a passing experience. It is the conviction about the authenticity of the revelation in Jesus or of the truth of the Father revealed in Jesus who has definitively overcome the world. This gives to the believer infinite capacity to suffer. So they remain perseveringly and constantly faithful to Jesus, the truth even to the point of death and in death.

Negatively expressed, it is the conviction given by the spirit of truth that the world by persecuting the believers are rejecting Jesus, the only revelation of the Father. That is the sin. So the believer inspired by the Spirit and strengthened by the conviction given by the Spirit opts out of the world and is ready to suffer for the gospel with Jesus. This is expressed in Jn. 16, 7-11: "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the advocate will not come to you; but if I

go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment, about sin because they do not believe in me, about righteousness because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer, about judgment because the ruler of this world has been condemned". So the conviction given to the disciples about Jesus positively and about the sin of the world by rejecting Jesus and persecuting his disciples, negatively.

The parallel teaching in the synoptic tradition can be found in Mt. 10, 19-20 and Lk. 12, 11. Fearless confession and witnessing is possible only through the Spirit. In fact it is the Spirit that speaks and gives testimony through the disciples. "When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time, for it is not you who speak but the spirit of your Father speaking through you." [Mt]. "When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers and the authorities do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say." In short the disciple becomes a vehicle of the Spirit who gives witness.

A community guided by the Spirit into all the truth

Finally the function of the Spirit in the community is seen in the continuous search for experiencing the whole truth and the ceaseless desire to be overcome by the truth. It is a community that seeks to understand the full import of the revelation in Christ. It is the Spirit who can remind the believers of all that Jesus taught: "But the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you" (Jn. 14, 26). "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth..." (Jn. 16, 13). The Spirit is, therefore, the authentic interpreter of the revelation in Jesus. Only a community that allows itself to be guided by the Spirit will participate in and be captured by the truth.

In conclusion, the new community as envisaged by the Gospels is basically pneumatic and charismatic in its birth, inner dynamic life, mission, guiding principles and laws, witness and onward movement towards the whole truth.

Book Review

John P. Keenan, *THE MEANING OF CHRIST, A MAHAYANA THEOLOGY*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989; *THE GOSPEL OF MARK, A MAHAYANA READING*, Orbis, 1995.

All scholars know that Buddhism and Christianity as systems and theologies are radically different. Dalai Lama himself is reported to have said that putting Buddhism and Christianity together is like "trying to put a yak's head on a cow's body". So asking what Christianity can contribute to Buddhism, or vice versa what Christians can borrow from the Buddhists does not make any sense. On the other hand, there are many Christians who spend time with Buddhist practices and find that they deepen their own Christian experience. Moving from Church to Zendo and back again they find that they are able to respond more and more heartily to the Gospel. At a recent international monastic meeting held at Chicago both Catholic and Buddhist groups of monks appeared as soul brothers finding each other's monastic practices co-genial; the non-monkish scholars participating in the meeting alone felt left out as outsiders. John P. Keenan, a Buddhist scholar and an Episcopal priest in his several writings tries to show how in at least one Buddhist framework, namely that of Mahayana, it may be possible to understand Jesus Christ the way the early Christian writers like St. Ignatius of Antioch and Origen thought of Christology. Ignatius spoke of God as "the silence out of which the word comes forth", and Origen warned that "to say even true things about God involves no small risk".

Keenan's *The Meaning of Christ* is directed to an understanding of the core of Christian doctrines of Incarnation and the Trinity, and it "aims at objectifying the genesis and nature of being awakened in Christ...to bring to speech the interior experience of Christian enlightenment." Studying Christ is not merely investigating the life of an individual human being who lived in Palestine some two thousand years ago. The meaning and relevance of the historical Jesus can be found "only from the moves within a mystic realm of meaning in which meaning is instituted not by

thinking and judging, but by the immediacy of the contact, of being touched." In fact this inner experience of Jesus present to us today is the source from which all theologizing springs (p.1). For Keenan this understanding of faith does not come from a painstaking scholarly study of the loci of theology, but rather "from pondering the scriptures and commentaries of the Buddhist Mahayana tradition." He argues that to date, the Christian West has been unable organically to relate its own mystical thinkers to its doctrinal, theoretical thinking and ascribes it to "an inability to differentiate that realm of mystic awareness, an inability to understand the mind of faith in its polyvalent realms of meaning" [p.2].

What comes in handy on the Buddhist side is that according to the Mahayana of Nagarjuna, the doctrine that all things are "empty" does not lead to nihilism and despair but to non-attachment. This corrects the Western essentialism and logos philosophy that tended for a long time to ground all things in God as the ground of all being, imagined through the analogy of being as a sort of super-essence. Mahayana Buddhism does not demand any such ultimate metaphysical security. In fact, what is demanded also by the transcendent 'person' of Jesus who is beyond essence, is the emptiness of the "illuminated". Another notion that Keenan assumes from Buddhism is the doctrine of "two truths". On the level of the really real all things are empty; one cannot postulate a super-essence as a sort of metaphysical insurance, without incurring a certain self-contradiction. As Keenan says, "The role of doctrine in Mahayana theology is not to communicate a body of information about God, but to engender a sense of the presence of God beyond all words. All proclaimed knowledge of God is parable, not entailing acceptance of a given state of affairs in the Godhead, but eliciting conversions in the minds of the hearers".

But alongside of this truth there is a second truth that all things of our experience have a reality of their own in interdependence. Buddhism called it 'pratityasamutpata', dependent origination of things. What corresponds to this in Christianity is the idea of the story. The world itself is the story of the creation by God, the emergence of all things from God and their final return to him. Even according to Christian metaphysics creation does not add anything to God. A God creating and not creating is exactly the same. The New Testament is the story of God in a new way: The Creator enters creation to lead all things back to their origin,

The story of Jesus in all its New Testament versions, in the definitions of Nicea and Chalcedon, in the theology of the Cappadocians and the Alexandrians, of Basil and Athanasius, Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem and Cyril of Alexandria, is after all the story of the Incarnation, the story of the origins in the Divine Logos and their recreation salvation in the same Son of God, who in the process cannot suffer any change or modification. All the change is in the created humanity of Jesus and in the creation saved through him. According to Keenan, "the wisdom themes of the Old Testament provided the New Testament writers with a number of patterns for interpreting the Christ meaning. Their Christological understanding reflects the concerns of the authors of Proverb, Sirach, Qoheleth, Job and Wisdom. They came to identify Christ with Wisdom and saw in the pattern of his life, death and resurrection an answer to the dilemmas about human suffering, death and the silence of God" (p. 29).

What Keenan principally objects to is the development of word-theology as the be all and end all of faith. The Abba experience of Jesus denotes not only the direct experience of Jesus with God as his Father, but also the ensuing wisdom-revelation that the Son, Jesus, receives from that experience. "The basic Christian experience and understanding of the meaning of Christ revolves upon the conversion from boasting consciousness to a mystic, direct, immediate experience of God as Abba" (p. 43). But there was a shift in the consciousness from the undifferentiated realm of mystic meaning to the realm of theory, and this is reflected in the development of Christological thinking in the first centuries of the church. It has its appropriateness only within its particular linguistic and cultural context (p. 50-51). The author states in a later article in answer to his critics: "Mahayana insists that there is no direct continuity between silence and speech ... No language therefore can express ultimate meaning" (*Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 13, 1993, p. 20). So even though there is no contradiction in constructing doctrinal or scholastic systems, they are all built of straw. What the teaching of the two truths does is "dethrone doctrine from its assumed absolute status" and champion its validity as coventional, that is well reasoned and coherent, tested by tradition and dependently co-arisen" (Ibid. p. 22).

In order to lighten the tension between the experience of transcendence through the emptiness doctrine and our worldly experience, Keenan undertakes a Mahayana reading of the Gospel of Mark. This is said to be "an attempt to realize that possibility of 'passing over' into the faith and way of life of another culture in order to return to one's own time and culture with one's outlook, faith and understanding both deepened and broadened". Here Mahayana thought is taken as a grid to block out Matthew and allow only Mark's Gospel to be seen as it was before Matthew came along (p.4). The deconstructive reading of Mark "tears down any fixed textual stability, maintaining that truth is empty of any fixed essence and in the final analysis beyond the grasp of discriminative thinking. It precludes following redactional or compositional strategies aimed to uncover the latent ideational content of a text and then to formulate its theological viewpoint in propositional language. Any viewpoint whatsoever is emptied of essential content, for all are based, the Mahayana thinker claims, on futile attempts to identify a permanent something that might be seen as basic, stable meaning". The basic supposition is that the Gospel of Mark did not have any clear and ideological point of view (pp. 5-6). Here the author recognizes that the text itself would become irrelevant, since it would vanish "in swirls of deconstructive double-backs", and end up as nothing more than one expression of the hermeneutical needs of a specific community in a particular situation! One is no longer questioning the text, "but the self one sees reflected in interpreting that text", the Mahayana propaedeutic for attaining the awareness of the emptiness of all things, including the questioning self (p. 7).

Then the question arises why insist on Mark? Would not any other text do, since the Mahayana approach to all propositional truth is what is implied? In fact Keenan does not claim to present a faithful interpretation of Mark. He only attempts to read the Mahayana meaning into it. He finds Mark more congenial because "the Gospel of Mark depicts Jesus' entire life as a journey along the way", recapitulating the ongoing journey of Israel out of Egypt, out of Sinai, out of Babylon, and into the promised land. 'The Way' appears in the Markan story that it is not knowledge that one finds, but temporality of the experience within the story itself. 'On the way' is an enacted spatial metaphor of discipleship. Throughout the Gospel Jesus consistently undermines expected

notions of religious truth. All viewpoints are subjected to eschatological critique (p. 8). Mark does not depict any mysticism of the Cross as a union of life and death, nor is his Gospel so structured as to depict the irruption of the divine into human living. Keenan finds the mysticism of the cross and resurrection "encapsulated in the Mahayana summary that all is only worldly convention" excluding all facile identification of ultimate meaning with any viewpoint (p. 36). The gospel of Mark does not offer any new ideology or any new set of truths, but only calls "for a conversion in the way traditions and truths are understood, just a discriminative realization" (p. 85).

What Keenan actually contributes to Christian theology is a timely corrective to the work of scholars like John Dominic Crossan and Werner Keller who oscillate awkwardly between deconstructive strategies that would abandon extra-linguistic realm of reference, and less rigorous moves that play back into more conventional discourse. His is a more radical reading of the text. Since Mahayana goes beyond all essence the question whether Jesus was merely man or a divine being is not relevant. But anyone can rightly ask whether in dealing with Christian faith one can stop with Mahayana. Should not one go beyond this negative criticism of the logos theology of Greek origin, and the categories of emptiness and co-production taking these rather as a propaedeutic to a more positive understanding of Mark and of the whole Christian message. It will be naive to write off the whole Judeo-Christian religious thought as pure anthropomorphism belonging purely to the world of co-production. The idea of the Kingdom of God here and now, central to the Gospels, takes the father-son and lover-beloved personal relation, abstracts it from all human and creaturely imperfections and projects it beyond the realm of essences to the divine level and makes it the ideal of faith experience. Here the goal is not merely to attain the intimacy of the divine, but rather to expand that fellowship to embrace all human beings and the world itself and to make the world God's Kingdom. God so loved the world as to give it his own beloved Son to adopt in him all as his children and to transport this world into his eternal Kingdom. This is the reverse of the Mahayana ideals of compassion and friendship as way to 'nirvana'. Both Buddha and Christ have to be seen as integral to the one religious history of humanity.

John B. Chethimattam

**Statement about Ownership and other Particulars
about Jeevadhara**

(Form V — see Rule 8)

1. Place of Publication : Kottayam - 686 041
2. Periodicity of its Publication : Monthly
3. Publisher's Name : Chairman, J. T. S.
(Fr. J. Constantine Manalel, CMI)
Nationality : Indian
Address : Jeevadhara
: Kottayam - 686 041, Kerala
4. Printer's Name : Fr. J. Constantine Manalel, CMI
Nationality : Indian
Address : Jeevadhara, Kottayam
5. Editor's Name : Fr. J. Constantine Manalel, CMI
Nationality : Indian
Address : Jeevadhara, Kottayam

Names and addresses of individuals who own the Newspaper (and partners or shareholders holding more than one percent of the total capital):

Jeevadhara Theological Society (J. T. S.)

I, J. Constantine Manalel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(Sd)
Publisher

Editorial

Asian Synod will be discussing a central question of Asian Christian Theology: how to understand and communicate the mystery of Christ in the religiously pluralistic context of Asian countries?

On the one hand, Church cannot deviate from the foundational experience of Jesus as the Christ: the Word incarnate, the Son of God sent to this world for the salvation of all. Church is bound to proclaim Christ as the Saviour. On the other hand, Church cannot disregard the working of the Spirit of God in all human persons, in all cultures and religions. Church is bound to listen to the Spirit 'that blows where it wills'. Is there a conflict between the Christological convictions and the pneumatological perspectives? Traditional theology may offer easy solutions, but in actual life in Asia there are conflictual situations, both in theological pursuits and in pastoral praxis.

This issue of *Jeevadhara* pursues this question, however not so much in a speculative style as in an existential way. We Asians are attuned to spiritual pursuits in the midst of the existential realities and struggles of life. The search of four Asian theologians is presented here:

Swami Abhishiktananda dives deep into the Asian mystical experience of oneness with the Divine and explores the meaning of the divine consciousness of Jesus. Raimundo Panikkar looks at the plurality of religions in Asia as a grace and finds in Christ the principle of the underlying unity. M. M. Thomas reflects on the dynamics of Asia's secular cultures and perceives Christ as the spiritual ferment of this pneumatic process. Sebastian Kappen analyses the socio-cultural struggles of the Asian people and discovers in Jesus God's offer to true freedom and justice. These four Asian 'seekers' are not offering a well-defined systematic theology on Christ, but true to their Asian sensitivity, they explore the meaning of Christ in Asia today. Their concern is not so much what Church *in Asia* should *do*, as how Church can *be* truly

Church of Asia. Their ideas may be criticised from the traditional patterns of western Christianity, but their insights do resonate with the Asian quest for the mystery of Christ, a quest in which believers of other religions would readily join them.

The first article offers a documented survey on Church's attitude to other religions across the centuries. The teaching of the magisterium in this regard is brought out with the help of official sources. An attempt is made at the end of the article to listen to the dialogue partners of other religions in their response to the teaching of the Church. Their questions offer the *status questionis* for the four perspectives which follow.

The theological articles contained in this issue may not be taken as doctrinal presentations; the purpose is not to instruct any one, but to invite all in the common search for understanding 'the height and the depth, the breadth and the length' of the mystery of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ. In this search Christians are like co-pilgrims with sisters and brothers of other religions. Christological reflections in Asia cannot be an internal affair of Christianity. There is need to develop an inter-religious hermeneutics in Christology, for Jesus Christ belongs to all. May the perspectives of this issue of *Jeevadhara* be a help in this common search and struggle.

Sebastian Painadath

Christ, Church and the Diversity of Religions

Sebastian Painadath

Sebastian Painadath examines critically the attitudes of Christianity towards other religions down the centuries. With the II Vatican Council a climate of dialogue has set in the Catholic Church: interreligious dialogue is understood as response to God's ongoing dialogue with humanity, and participation in the work of the Spirit that renews everything. After the Council the two Popes promoted a culture of dialogue, which opened broad perspectives for evangelisation in Asia. Yet the Christocentric standpoint of the Church does meet with a certain resentment from the dialogue partners of other religions. How far is authentic dialogue possible between Christianity and other Asian religions? Sebastian Painadath is the director of a Christian Ashram in South India.

1. Dialogue Phase [1950-]

We are living in a new age of Christianity. The Christian attitudes to believers of other religions have changed radically during the second half of this century. In the Catholic Church the II Vatican Council and in the other Churches the pursuits of the World Council of Churches brought in a new climate into World Christianity in this regard. 'Dialogue is the new way of being Church today' declared Pope Paul VI in 1964 (*Ecclesiam suam*, 63). Christians today understand themselves as co-pilgrims with believers of other religions in pursuit of the mystery of the Divine that transcends all religions and revelations. *Deus semper major!*

- 1.1 The Second World War reshaped the political landscape not only of Europe but of the other continents too. European nations gradually lost their imperial powers over the countries of Africa and Asia. The colonies became independent and consequently a new self-consciousness emerged in the hitherto colonised countries and peoples. This meant also

a reawakening of their religious identity. Hindus and Buddhists, Jews and Muslims, Taoists and Shintoists as well the diverse peoples of primal religions emerged as partners in dialogue with Christians world-wide. Increasingly Christians started reading the Scriptures and stories of other religions with a fascination. International conferences and travel facilities, research projects and spiritual movements accelerated this process of encounter between Christianity and other religions. Church could no more absolutise itself as the only revealed religion since the perception of truth evolved from a classicist understanding to a historical understanding and from a monocultural perspective to a pluralistic perspective. The growing secular ideologies too raised a lot of critique on the Church's traditional patterns of thought. In all these elements of the modern world the Church perceived the 'signs of the times' and the Church discerned them at the Second Vatican Council.

1.2 *The Second Vatican Council (1962-65)*: The perspectives of the Council on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions could be summarised as follows:

- 1.2.1 The unity of humanity: The basic perspective of the entire Council has been that of the unity of the people of God. The entire humanity is the people of God and the Church is sacrament of this theological reality. "All peoples comprise a single community, and have a single origin, since God made the whole human race dwell over the entire face of the earth. One also is their final goal: God. His providence, His manifestation of goodness, and His saving designs extend to all human persons." (NA 1) Hence right from the beginning of humanity God has been revealing Himself *in diverse ways* to different peoples.
- 1.2.2 Plurality of religions: In response to these diverse ways of God-man relationship religions arose in the spiritual evolution of humanity. "Human persons look in various religions for answers to those profound mysteries of the human condition, which today even as in olden times, deeply stir the human heart: What is a man? What is the meaning and purpose of our life? What is goodness and what is sin?

What gives rise to our sorrows and to what intent? Where lies the path to true happiness? What is the truth about death, judgement, and retribution beyond the grave? What, finally, is that ultimate and unutterable mystery which engulfs our being, and whence we take our rise, and whither our journey leads us? "(NA. 1) These are the fundamental questions articulated in the diverse religions and the Council respects the plurality of the ways in which such questions are articulated and responses experienced.

1.2.3 Fullness in Christ: The Council proclaims in unambiguous terms the foundational experience of Christian faith: "it is in Christ, the way, the truth and the life, that human persons find the fullness of religious life; in him God has reconciled all things to himself" (NA. 2.). Christ is the 'Light of all nations', for he is the fullness of all revelations (LG. 1, DV. 2). God's self-revelation and offer of salvation reached fulfilment in the Christ-event. Church is entrusted with the mission of sharing this experience with all peoples. "Church is the sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humanity" (LG. 1).

1.2.4 Christic orientation of humanity: Since the entire humanity is the people of God and the Christ event is the soteriological axis of it, 'we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every person the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery'. In this sense 'grace is at work in the hearts of all persons in an unseen way' (GS.22). "Those who have not received the Gospel are related in various ways to the People of God" (LG. 16). The Council mentions in this connection Jews and Muslims who belong with Christians to the common heritage of Abraham. Besides, 'those who seek in shadows and images the unknown God' also participate in the saving grace of God. Further, 'those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace' strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience'. And finally the Council makes it clear that the saving grace of God reaches out to the *atheists* too: "Nor does the divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those

who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to his grace" (LG. 16). With this universal perspective of the Council the Church transcends the ecclesiocentric exclusivistic attitudes which over the centuries determined the attitudes to believers of other religions.

- 1.2.5 Seeds of the Logos hidden in religions: In exploring the theological significance of the plurality of religions the Council takes recourse to the inclusivistic perspectives of the early Church Fathers. The divine Logos, the principle God's self-expression, has been operative in the world right from the beginning of creation, 'for everything has been created in and through the Logos' (Joh. 1, 3); since the Logos is the 'life of all and the light of human persons' (Joh 1, 5) it has to be assumed that the Logos has been at work in the hearts of all human persons, and in all cultures and religions. But this is an implicit presence that has been made explicit in the incarnation of the Logos in Christ. In the light of this core Christian experience the Council teaches: "Seeds of the Word lie hidden in the cultural and religious traditions of people"; these have to be respected as "treasures which a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth" (AG. 11), as they are 'precious elements of religion and humanity' (GS. 92). 'Whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations is a sort of secret presence of God', because 'doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified' (AG. 9, 4). The Council thus accepts the 'unseen work of grace in the hearts of all persons' (GS. 22) and recognises that 'religions do reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all persons' (NA. 2). With these expressions of the Council the Church returns to the theological perspectives of the early centuries when the other religions were respected as part of the universal plan of God.
- 1.2.6. Mission of the Church: The Council however sticks to the basic faith-experience of the Church: "In Christ Jesus God perfectly manifested Himself and His ways with human persons" (DH. 11). Hence the presence of the saving work of the Spirit revealed in other religions has to be understood

in 'relation to Christ the one Mediator' (LG.8). Church therefore looks at the elements of goodness and truth found among people of other religions as a 'preparation for the Gospel' (LG 16, AG.3). These fragmentary elements are to be brought into integration through the mission of the Church, which primarily means 'laying bare the seeds of the Word hidden in other religions', illuminating these treasures with the light of the Gospel, in order to set them free and to bring them under the dominion of God the Saviour' (AG.11). The latent presence of God is made manifest through evangelisation, the hidden seeds are brought to blossoming in the light of the Gospel. In this missionary process a purification too takes place. "Whatever truth and grace is to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, the missionary activity frees from all taints of evil and restores to Christ its maker, who overthrows the devil's domain and wards off the manifold malice of vice. And so, whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of human persons, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples, is not lost. More than that it is healed, ennobled and perfected..." (AG.9). Over the centuries the Church understood her mission as bringing Light into the totally dark recess of the hearts of the believers of other religions. The Council has perceived that the work of the Spirit and presence of the Logos is already there before the missionary comes into the sphere of another religion. This new perspective opened vast horizons of a dialogical encounter between the Gospel and the diverse religious cultures of humanity: Gospel enlightens religions and religions reinterpret the Gospel. The Council set in motion a process of inculturation whereby the message of Christ penetrates and transforms diverse cultures.

- 1.2.7 Freedom of religion: Missionary proclamation is not an aggressive activity; it is rather the communication of the experience of God's saving grace manifest in Christ. God respects the freedom of human persons, and hence no one shall be forced to adhere to a religion under any sort of coercion. The Council made a historical declaration on this: "The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all

persons are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such a wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits" (DH. 2). "The right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person"; hence it has to be recognised as a 'civil right' (DH. 2). This right means also a personal and communitarian responsibility: 'to seek the truth, especially religious truth ... and to adhere to it, once it is known' (DH. 2). "This inquiry has to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue. In the course of these human persons explain to one another the truth they have discovered ... in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth" (DH. 3). Religious freedom is not an unlimited freedom, but 'its exercise is subject to certain regulatory norms' which safeguard 'dealings in justice and civility' (DH. 7). With the proclamation of religious freedom the Council has gone far beyond the attitudes which evolved a century ago around Vatican I. The Council also admits that 'there have at times appeared ways of acting which were less in accord with the spirit of the Gospel and even opposed to it' (DH. 12).

- 1.2.8 Promotion of Dialogue: With this positive assessment of the plurality of religions in the economy of salvation the Council corrects the attitude of the Church in the past and declares: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all human persons" (NA. 2). Sincere respect for other religions demands a new culture of dialogue. Hence the Council admonishes: "The Church has therefore this exhortation for the faithful: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral

goods found among these people as well as the values in their society and culture" (NA. 2). What is significant is that the Council wants Christians not only to *preserve but also to promote* the Spirit-given values of truth and goodness in other religious communities. Such a culture of dialogue would demand that Christians live "in esteem and love for believers of other religions, 'share in their cultural and social life by various exchanges and enterprises of human living' and get to familiarity with their national and religious traditions" (AG. 11). "Respect and love ought to be extended to all those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them" (GS 28). If asked, what is the goal of this culture of dialogue, the Council would reply: 'to unify under one Spirit all human persons of whatever nation, race or culture'; 'to receive the inspirations of the Spirit faithfully and to measure up to them energetically', 'in order to build up the world in genuine peace' (GS 92). This pneumatological perspective on believers of other religions — that the one divine Spirit is transforming the lives of all human persons — opens a wide horizon for recognising God's universal plan of salvation which comprises the diversity of religions and for moving with them in an ongoing spiritual pilgrimage. Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II often use this impressive imagery of *pilgrimage* in order to describe the attitude of the Church to other religions.

2. Teachings of the Popes after the Council

- 2.1 *Magisterium of Pope Paul VI (1963-1978)*: The culture of dialogue that the II Vatican Council initiated has been a central theme of the Encyclicals of Pope Paul VI. "Dialogue is the new way of being Church" — the Pope declared in 1964 (ES 63). The Pope meant not only dialogue with other religions, but 'with the world in which the Church exists and labours' (ES 65). The theological foundation for this 'all-embracing attitude of dialogue' (ES 76) is the perception that the entire world, in its historical evolution and religio-cultural plurality, is the milieu of the transforming

work of the divine Spirit. 'The Spirit alone produces the new creation, for 'the world and its history are full of the seeds of the Word' [EN 75, 80]. In the diverse religions 'the spiritual life of innumerable human communities finds valid expressions' [EN 53]. Hence the Church has to enter into a 'dialogue of salvation' with all of them [ES 77]. With this term Pope Paul VI means five things:

- 2.1.1 He upholds the Church's faith that it is in Jesus Christ that 'God has revealed the perfect and definitive form in which he wishes to be known' [ES 107]. Christ is therefore the centre and fulfilment of the history of religions.
- 2.1.2 The mystery of Christ has been revealed to the Church and hence the Church has a primacy over the other religions. "Indeed honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that, there, is but one religion, the religion of Christianity. It is our hope that all who seek God and adore him may come to acknowledge its truth" [ES 107]. The Pope clarifies the distinction between Christianity and other religions: "By virtue of our religion a true and living relationship with God is established, which other religions cannot achieve even though they seem, as it were, to have their arms raised up towards heaven" [EN 53].
- 2.1.3 Hence the Church has a divine mandate to share the Christ experience with believers of religions. "The Church has a message to deliver, a communication to offer" [ES 65]. "To proclaim Christ and his Kingdom with all due respect for others is not merely the right of the evangelizer, it is his duty" (EN 80).
- 2.1.4 However the Pope gives a caution: "It is certainly wrong to force anything on the conscience of our brothers". Evangelization should be free from any sort of 'coercion or dishonest or undue persuasion' (EN 80). Communicating our Christ experience takes place in a process of dialogue with sisters and brothers of other religions. "Dialogue is found in the very plan of God; religion by its very nature is relationship between God and man" (ES 70). Pope understands history of humanity as the history of the 'long and changing dialogue' between God and man (ES 70). Through respectful dialogue we participate in this divine dialogue and

bring the lives of people into the sphere of the transforming work of the Spirit.

- 2.1.5 Integral human liberation has to be the main concern of dialogue. "Dialogue has to be based on man" (PP 73). Dialogical relations among believers of various religions have 'to be inspired by brotherly love and moved by the sincere desire to build a civilisation founded on world solidarity' (PP 73). Interreligious collaboration is needed 'in promoting common ideals of religious liberty, human brotherhood, good culture, social welfare and civil order' (ES 108). Pope Paul VI envisages a Church that enters into an ongoing and all-embracing process of dialogue with religions and cultures out of an authentic experience of God in Christ (EN=Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975. ES=Ecclesiam Suam 1964. PP=Populorum Progressio, 1967).
- 2.2 *Magisterium of Pope John Paul II (1978-)*: Much more than any Pope in the past the present Holy Father has been keenly engaged in promoting dialogue of religions. His acquaintance with the heads of various religious communities, his manifold meetings with believers of other religions, his wide travels in the world and his study of the Scriptures as well as the writings of the sages of other religions have helped him to develop very open perspectives on Church's relation with other religions. His all-pervading concern for bringing about world peace and solidarity among various peoples has been basically a concern to promote harmony of religions, for there is no lasting peace possible without peace among believers of diverse religions. Hence in his Encyclicals he has been consistently exhorting Christians to give high priority to the cause of interreligious dialogue. In these texts however one can see a certain tension between the Christological concerns of Church's traditional faith and the anthropological concerns of peace and harmony in the pluralistic world. The teachings of Pope John Paul II on dialogue may be summarised as follows:
 - 2.2.1 There is a basic unity of humanity and hence the entire history of humanity has to be seen theologically from the perspective of the one universal salvific plan of God. "Though the routes taken may be different, there is but a single goal to which is directed the deepest aspiration of

the human spirit, as expressed in its quest for God and also in its quest, through its tending towards God, for the full dimension of its humanity, or in other words, for the full meaning of human life" (RH 11).

2.2.2 In this basic orientation of humanity unto God the Pope perceives the work of the divine Spirit. "The Spirit is at the very source of man's existential and religious questioning." Hence 'his presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time' (RM 28). The 'interior and mysterious workings of God's Spirit are to be recognised in the great religious and sapiential traditions of East and West' (VS 94). Consequently we Christians should recognise the 'Spirit operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body' (RH 6); we should have 'a deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills' (RM 56). The Pope clarifies his perspective: "The Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man" (RM. 29).

2.2.3 However it is in Jesus Christ that the Church experiences the fulfilled revelation of the power and presence of the Spirit in history. Here the Pope uncompromisingly upholds the Church's faith: "In Christ and through Christ God has revealed himself fully to mankind and has definitively drawn close to it; at the same time, in Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity, of the heights to which he is raised, of the surpassing worth of his own humanity, and of the meaning of his existence" [RH. 11]. Hence the Truth 'shines forth in its fullness on the face of Christ' [VS 94]. "Christ is the one Mediator between God and man and the sole Redeemer of the world" [TA 52]. "In Christ, God calls all peoples to himself and he wishes to share with them the fullness of his revelation and love" [RM 55].

2.2.4 The Church perceives this call of God, for it is to the Church that the mission of Christ is entrusted. It is from this Christologico-ecclesiological perspective that the Pope interprets the distinction between the Church and other

religions: [a] Other religions possess only 'signs of Christ's presence and the working of the Spirit', but 'the Church has received the fullness of Revelation for the good of all' [RM 56]. In other religions there is a 'reflection of that Truth which enlightens all men'; but the Church proclaims Jesus Christ as 'the way and the truth and the life' [RM 55]. [b] In other religions 'man's search for God has been expressed from earliest times', but 'in the Church there is the revelation of the God who comes in person to speak to man of himself and to show him the path by which he may be reached'. 'The Incarnate Word is thus the fulfilment of the yearning present in all the religions of mankind.' Hence 'in Christ, religion is no longer a *blind search for God* [Acts 17: 27] but the response of faith to God who reveals himself' [TA 6]. [c] Christ is to be 'clearly distinguished from the founders of other great religions.' The prophets spoke 'in the name of God'; but 'Jesus is God himself speaking in his Eternal Word made flesh' — here we touch upon 'the essential point of difference by which Christianity differs from all other religions.' "Christ is the fulfilment of the yearnings of all the world's religions, and as such he is their sole and definitive completion." (TA 6, 38). (d) The Church can have a definitive claim to be *avant garde* in relation to other religions, for the 'Church is the *ordinary means of salvation*, and *she alone* possesses the fullness of the means of salvation.' (RM. 55) "The religion founded upon Jesus Christ is a religion of glory; it is a new newness of life for the praise of the glory of God' (TA. 6).

2.2.5 It is on the basis of this *status ecclesiae* that the Pope makes a strong appeal for renewed efforts of evangelization among believers of other religions. "The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call, faith and baptism which God wills for all people. " (RM. 55) Evangelization is therefore not only proclaiming Christ as the Saviour of mankind, but also presenting the Church as the God-willed *ordinary means of salvation*.

2.2.6. 'Interreligious dialogue is a part of Church's evangelizing mission' (RM. 55), because 'dialogue is a path towards the

Kingdom of God' (RM. 57). Through interreligious dialogue the Church opens herself to the Spirit that is at work in other religions. Hence 'each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue although not always to the same degree or in the same way'. (RM. 57) The Pope does not perceive any conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue. He teaches that both must maintain their intimate connection and their distinctiveness. '(RM 55)

- 2.2.7. It is the firm hope of the Pope that the next millennium will 'provide a great opportunity for interreligious dialogue' People of various religions will have to interpret the signs of the times together and respond creatively to the demands of the Spirit imbedded in them. This collective response will find expression in the efforts to restore peace and justice wherever they have been violated, in a greater awareness of our responsibility for the environment, and in bringing about reconciliation and solidarity among different peoples particularly in the complex relationship between the north and the south of the world. (TA. 46)
(RH. = Redemptor Hominis, 1979; RM = Redemptoris Missio, 1990; VS = Veritatis Splendor, 1993; TA = Tertio Millennio Adveniente, 1994)

2. 3. *Allocutions of Pope Paul VI*: Already during the II Vatican Council Pope Paul VI made a prophetic statement: "Dialogue is the new way of being the Church!" (Ecclesiam suam, 63) He perceived that the entire new thrust of the Council has been that of dialogue at all levels of Christian life: dialogue among the faithful within the Church, and dialogue with believers of other religions as well as with the agents of the modern secular culture. In his meetings with representatives of other religions during his travels to Asia and in his allocutions in Rome he upheld the importance of interreligious dialogue especially in view of building peace in the world. As the supreme Teacher of the Catholic Church he felt duty-bound to present Christ as the Light of the nations in the process of dialogue among believers of diverse religions. Some of the significant texts of his allocutions are the following:

- 2.3.1. Unity of humanity: "We are all children of one human family, sons and daughters of the one God, and in that spirit we shall labour together to make of the world an acceptable place where all children can rightfully enjoy the creation of God." (To the Indian Ambassador of India, 25.03.1965)
- 2.3.2. A new culture of dialogue: "We must therefore come closer together with our hearts,...in mutual understanding, esteem and love. We must meet not merely as tourists, but as pilgrims who set out to find God, not in buildings of stone but in human hearts. Man must meet man, nation must meet nation, as brothers and sisters, as children of God. In this mutual understanding and friendship, in this sacred communion, we must begin to work together to build the common future of the human race." (to Representatives of religions, Bombay, 03.12.1964)
- 2.3.3. Meaning of Religion: Rarely has the longing for God been expressed with words so full of the spirit of Advent as in the words written in your sacred Books many centuries before Christ. *From the unreal lead me to the Real; from darkness lead me to Light; from death lead me to Immortality.* (Brihadarnyaka, 1.3.28). This is a prayer which belongs also to our times. Today more than ever, it should rise from every human heart" (To Representatives of religions, Bombay, 03.12.1964). "We feel close to those who have in common with us the momentous search for the Divine and a trusting submission to the laws of Heaven, those who look to religions for answers to the great problems which confront and torment mankind, and who find therein, their strength and their hope" (To Followers of religions, Manila, 28.11.1970). "Religion is a cry uttered in the mysterious immensity of Being ... Religion is the breath that modern man needs more and more: to live!" (General Audience, 12.12.1972).
- 2.3.4 Work of the Holy Spirit: "The Fathers of the II Vatican Council saw in the great religious creeds a very significant, though incomplete, expression of the religious genius of mankind, a testimony of the secret action carried out in the course of centuries by the grace of the Holy Spirit — which fills the whole earth — in order to bring forth in upright

souls the seeds of the Word which lie hidden in them (AG. 11), so that those religious manifestations, in spite of the differences, often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men [NA.2] [to the Secretariat for Non-Christians, 06.07.1974].

- 2.3.5 Christ the Redeemer: "It has pleased the wisdom and the goodness of God to save men in Christ, our only Redeemer" [Message for Mission Day, 12.10.1967]. "What the child of Bethlehem brings to the world is in fact something the world could not have given itself, something entirely new ... Here it is no longer man who is attempting to raise himself to God. It is God who comes down to man to raise man to him, to free him and to save him. It is God who takes the initiative, God who bursts into the fabric of human history. This is the Gospel, the 'good news', the only true novelty, that has occurred in the long and arduous spiritual history of humanity" [to the Diplomatic Corps at the Vatican, 25.12.1967]. "In the religious and moral values that are found among non-Christian peoples we glimpse a providential predisposition to the fullness of Christian revelation" [to the Synod of Bishops, 27.09.1974].
- 2.3.6 Church, the true religion: "The II Vatican Council reaffirms that the true religion, that desired by God, is one alone: it is the one we have the good fortune and the obligation to practice" [at the *Angelus*, Rome, 17.10.1965]. "Man is not content with raising his arms towards God: he wishes to reach Him, to meet Him ... The religions invented by man are attempts that are sometimes extremely daring and noble, at other times and more often, are vain efforts and fantastic superstitions ... To the subjective religious outlook of man there must correspond a positive, objective, actual religion: this answer is given authentically and fully only by the Christian religion. This is the pivot of human history" [General Audience, 12.12.1972].
- 2.3.7 Call of Evangelization: "Peoples and minds must discover in themselves the deep, hidden predispositions for Christian faith, and must recognise in Christian faith the sublime interpretation of those predispositions, that is to say, of their characteristic trait of humanity *fitted for God*, and recognise also their calling to the fullness of life which

Christianity alone can offer in an expression ever new and modern" (To the Faithful, Rome, 06. 01. 1969). "The Gospel teaches us that it is not enough to approach others, to admit them to dialogue with us, to confirm our trust in them, to seek their well-being. It is necessary, in addition, to make every effort so that they be converted, to do everything possible so that they return. It is necessary to bring them back to the divine order, which is only one: that of grace, of faith, of the Church, of the Christian life" (to the Faithful, 23.06.1968). "No one must be forced to believe; no one must be prevented from believing and from professing his own belief — it is a fundamental right of the human person" (To the Missions sent by Nations to II Vatican Council, 07.12.1965).

2.3.8 Dialogue with others: "Dialogue will contribute to the dissipation of misunderstandings, to the prevention of unjustifiable barriers that separate the sons and daughters of the same land, to the promotion of mutual respect, uniting everyone in the defence of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, which constitute the solid foundation upon which human society rests" (Message to the Council of Religions of Vietnam, Rome, 15.09.1966). "There is no dialogue possible without a thorough understanding of the other. It is necessary to go beyond the limits of all language, cultural reflexes, even polemics and mistrust, to be open to things greater than ourselves and to universality ... Everyone rightly expects to be fully recognised by the other and loved for his own sake, with the values and differences of his own culture. Without love there is no real knowledge" (to the Secretariat for Non-Christians, 05.10.1972).

2.3.9 Promotion of peace and well-being: "True love must be renewed in our midst and must become the inspiring force of all our efforts. We need peace and stability in our world; we need food, clothing and housing for millions; we need honesty and devotion and untiring work for bettering man's condition, but all these efforts must be animated by true love" (to Representatives of religions, Bombay, 03.12.1964). "Dialogue makes it possible for us to serve harmoniously all men without distinction of race, belief or opinion. The Church's purpose in so doing is to promote peace and

well-being, those blessings which God himself desires that men should have" (to Followers of religions, Sydney, 02.12.1970). "Mutual esteem and love must find expression in practical collaboration. We hope we will soon see the day when all religions will unite their efforts concretely in the service of man, his freedom, and his dignity" (to the Secretariat for Non-Christians, 05.10.1972).

2.4 *Allocutions of Pope John Paul II:* A very high priority has been given by the Holy Father to the promotion of harmony among believers of different religions in all parts of the world. In the countries he visited he was very keen on meeting representatives of various religions, and in Rome he was ever available to address delegates of inter-religious symposia and pilgrimages. In all such encounters he upheld the epochal need to promote a 'civilisation of love' among believers of diverse religions. In speaking to bishops coming from Afro-Asian countries he demanded that interreligious dialogue should be their pastoral priority. While welcoming ambassadors to the Vatican and while addressing the political heads of national and international organisations he emphasised the need to safeguard freedom of religion and to promote harmony among religions. In these allocutions one can perceive a genuine concern to preserve the integrity of religion and a keen sensitivity to respect the diversity of religions. However as the supreme head of the Church he uncompromisingly upholds the centrality of Christ and the need of the Church in the economy of salvation. Here are some of the inspirational passages from his allocutions:

2.4.1 Unity of humanity "There is *only one* divine plan for every human being who comes into this world, one single origin and goal, whatever may be the colour of his skin, the historical and geographical framework within which he happens to live and act, or the culture in which he grows up and expresses himself. The differences are a less important element, when confronted with the unity which is radical, fundamental and decisive." (Assisi, 22.12.1986) "The entire human race, in the infinite complexity of its history, with its different cultures, is 'called to form the new People of God'. (to the Roman Curia, 22.12.1986). "If all men

and women, whatever the differences between them, cling to the truth with respect for the unique dignity of every human being, a new world order, *a civilisation of love* can be achieved" (To Indians in Rome, 12.06, 1986).

- 2.4.2 Towards a culture of dialogue: "In a world that is increasingly interdependent there is a great need for dialogue and cooperation among believers in order to build the future of the human family on the solid ground of respect for each person's inalienable dignity, equality, justice for all, tolerance and solidarity in human relations. I am fully convinced that the time is ripe in human history for followers of the various religions to seek a new respect for one another". [Colombo, 21.01.1995] "Thanks to the manifold forms of encounter and exchange, the various religions have been able to attain a clearer awareness of their considerable responsibilities with regard to the good of humanity as a whole. They are tending to assume a more conscious and decisive attitude in shaping social and cultural realities in the community of peoples" [Message to the World Day of Peace, 08.12.1991] "Interreligious dialogue has taken on a new and immediate urgency in the present historical circumstances... Genuine dialogue leads to inner purification and conversion and only such a spiritual renewal will save the world from further widespread sufferings" [To the Pontifical Council for Dialogue, 13.11.1992].
- 2.4.3. Meaning of religion: "Religion directs our lives totally to God, and at the same time religion is concerned with humanity and everything that belongs to humanity—to the point that our religion becomes our life"(to the Representatives of religions, Delhi, 02.02.1986). "Integral human development requires a spiritual vision of man—that man is a pilgrim of the Absolute, travelling toward a goal, seeking the face of God. From this spiritual vision of man comes the strength to persevere in the cause, as well as the clarity of thought needed to find concrete solutions to man's problems. From it comes an indomitable spirit to win for each man and woman the rightful place in this world."(ibid)
- 2.4.4. Plurality of religions: "Religions are many and varied, and they reflect the desire of men and women down through the

ages to enter into a relationship with the Absolute Being." (To Representatives of religions, Assisi, 27.10.1986) "The origin of the one human family is found in God. We can call God by many names, without ever completely exhausting his reality, which is beyond us." (to Representatives of religions, Senegal, 20.02.1992) "The fact that we have come here does not imply any intention of seeking a religious consensus among ourselves or of negotiating our faith convictions ... There can be no question of reducing them to a kind of common denominator." (to Representatives of religions, Assisi, 27.10.1986). "It is precisely because we often differ on certain important points that an attitude of mutual respect and esteem is all the more necessary." [to the Indian community, Rome, 12.06.1986] "Loyalty demands that we should recognise and respect our differences... We must respect each other, and we must also stimulate each other in good works on the path of God." [to young Muslims, Morocco, 19.08.1985) "Genuine dialogue helps us to understand one another as *religious* men and women, and enables us to respect our differences and affirm clearly and unequivocally what we believe to be the true way to salvation." [to World Conference on Religion and Peace, Rome, 03.11.1994]

2.4.5. Dialogue of salvation: "Interreligious dialogue at its deepest level is always a *dialogue of salvation*, because it seeks to discover, clarify and understand better the signs of the age-long dialogue which God maintains with mankind.." (to the Pontifical Council for Dialogue, Rome, 13.11.1992). "This dialogue continues to the present day, and will go on until the end of time." (To Islamic leaders, Senegal, 22.02.1992) "By dialogue, we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God. The fruit of dialogue is union between people and union of people with God, who is the source and revealer of all truth, and whose Spirit guides men in freedom only when they meet one another in all honesty and love." (To Representatives of religions, Madras, 05.02.1986).

2.4.6 Spirit beyond the Church: "The Spirit 'who blows where he wills' is the source of inspiration for all that is true, good

and beautiful, according to the magnificent phrase of an unknown author from the time of Pope Damasus [366-84] which states that every truth, no matter who says it, comes from the Holy Spirit" [General Audience, Rome, 05.12.1990]. "The action of the Holy Spirit, who in every time and place has prepared the encounter with the living God in all souls and peoples, is still at work today in the hearts of human beings, in cultures, and in religions ... It is the same Spirit who was at work in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus and who is at work today in the Church ... Everyone's task is to discern and respond to the presence and activity of the Spirit" (to the Urban University, Rome, 11.04.1991). "For the Church, dialogue is based on the very life of God, one and triune. God is Father of all humanity; Christ has joined every person to himself; the Spirit is at work in each individual." (To the Secretariat for Non-Christians, Rome, 03.03.1984).

2.4.7 No salvation apart from Christ: "The divine plan, unique and definitive, has its centre in Jesus Christ, God and man, 'in whom men find the fullness of their religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to himself'. There is no one who can remain outside or on the margins of the work of Jesus Christ" (to the Roman Curia, 22.12.1986). "The gift of salvation cannot be limited to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church ... However we must maintain that the way of salvation always passes through Christ, and therefore the Church and her missionaries have the task of making him known and loved in every time, place and culture. Apart from Christ there is no salvation." (General Audience, 31.05.1995). "Only in Christ can all mankind be saved. 'There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we are to be saved'. Christ is the centre of the created world and of history." (General Audience, 22.10.1986),

2.4.8 No salvation without the Church: "Since Christ brings about salvation through his Mystical Body, which is the Church, the way of salvation is connected essentially with the Church. The axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* means that for those who are not ignorant of the fact that the Church has been established as necessary by God through

Jesus Christ, there is an obligation to enter the Church and remain in her in order to attain salvation ... Without the Church there is no salvation — *sine ecclesia nulla salus*: belonging to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, however implicitly and indeed mysteriously, is an essential condition for salvation." (General Audience, 31.05.1995). "The various non-Christian religions are above all the expressions of the quest on man's part, while the Christian faith is based on revelation on God's part ... That *religious sense*, that is the religious knowledge of God on the part of the people, goes back to the rational knowledge of which man is capable through his natural powers; this is distinguished from Christian faith as knowledge based on revelation and a knowing response to the gift of God present and at work in Jesus Christ." (General Audience 05.06.1985).

2.4.9 Mission of evangelization: Evangelization constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is her vocation; it is her deepest identity. In this the Church, which is Christ's fullness, faithfully reflects the mission of Jesus, who says of himself: I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, for this is what I was sent to do (to Bishops of Nigeria, 15.02.1982). "The fact that followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people. It is a contradiction of the Gospel and of the Church's very nature to assert, as some do that the Church is only one way of salvation among many, and that her mission towards the followers of other religions should be nothing more than to help them to be better followers of those religions." [Letter to the bishops of Asia, 23.06.1990].

2.4.10 The epochal need for dialogue: "Interreligious dialogue is one element of the mission of the Church ... It is a Christian work desired by God. Dialogue is a complex of human activities, all founded upon respect and esteem for people of different religions. It includes daily living together in peace and mutual help, with each bearing witness to the values learned through the experience of faith. It means a readiness to cooperate with others for the betterment of

humanity, and a commitment to search together for true peace. It means the encounter of theologians and other religious specialists to explore, with their counterparts from other religions, areas of convergence and divergence. Where circumstances permit, it means a sharing of spiritual experiences and insights. This sharing can take the form of coming together as brothers and sisters to pray to God in ways which safeguard the uniqueness of each religious tradition." [to the Secretariat for Non-Christians, 28.04.1987]

"All Christians are called to dialogue. In this ecclesial activity, it is necessary to avoid exclusivism and dichotomies. Authentic dialogue becomes witness, and true evangelization is accomplished by respecting and listening to one another" (To the Secretariat for non-Christians, 03.03.1984).

"Interreligious dialogue is never easy. It requires solid convictions and great understanding and sensitivity regarding difference. It requires a spirituality of dialogue, that is, a vision capable of sustaining the efforts to promote good and harmonious relations among followers of different religions." (to the Pontifical Council for Dialogue, 24.11.1995).

2.4.11 Integral liberation: "Interreligious dialogue should not remain only a matter of theological discussion. Where possible, it must reach to the grassroots, correcting misunderstandings communities have of one another, and fostering solidarity in the building of a more just and human society." (To the Plenary Assembly of FABC, 15.01.1995).

"Interreligious collaboration must be concerned with the struggle to eliminate hunger, poverty, ignorance, persecution, discrimination and every form of enslavement of the human spirit. Religion is the mainspring of society's commitment to justice, and interreligious collaboration must reaffirm this in practice." (to the Followers of religions, Delhi, 02.02.1986).

"Christians will work together in order to bring about a more just and peaceful society in which the poor will be the first to be served." (to the people of Asia, 21.02.1981).

2.4.12 Peace, freedom and family integrity: "We are all convinced that the various religions can and should contribute to peace ... Peace needs to be built on justice, truth, freedom

and love. Religions have the necessary function of helping to dispose human hearts so that true peace can be fostered and preserved" (To Representatives of religions, Rome, 29.10.1986). "Only through interreligious dialogue can the powerful role of religious faith be placed at the service of peace through the elimination of prejudice and intolerance, to the glory of God in whose oneness we all believe." (to the Dialogue Sub-Unit, Rome, 21.06.1991). "Dialogue helps to ensure that in our zeal to proclaim our beliefs, and in the methods used, we respect every person's right to religious freedom. By cultivating positive and constructive relations between our communities and their individual members, we arrive at a mutual understanding and respect, which guarantees the exercise of this fundamental human right." (to Representatives of religions, Tanzania, 02.09.1990). "The family is the first community charged with educating the essential values of human life. Co-operation among religious leaders is important in upholding and promoting this basic human institution especially in these times when it is being attacked from many sides, as if it were something to be abandoned, forgotten or replaced by other forms of personal relationships." (to the World Conference on Religion and Peace, Rome, 03.11.1994).

- 2.4.13 Prayer, the bond of union: "Dialogue of spirituality is an essential and crowning form of dialogue between men and women of different religious experiences. It enables persons rooted in their own religious traditions to share their spiritual riches of prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute." (To the Pontiff, Council for Dialogue, 24.11.1995). "There is the dimension of prayer, which in the very diversity of religions tries to express communication with a Power above all our human forces. Peace depends basically on this Power, which we call God ... We are here [at Assisi] because we are sure that above all and beyond all other measures, we need prayer—intense, humble and trusting prayer — if the world is finally to become a place of true and permanent peace." [Assisi, 27.10.1986]. "Certainly we cannot *pray together*, namely to make a common prayer, but we can be present while others pray. In this way we manifest our respect for the

prayer of others and for the attitude of others before the divinity." [General audience, 22.10.1986]. "Prayer is the bond which most effectively unites us. Through prayer believers meet one another at a level where inequalities, misunderstandings, bitterness and hostility are overcome, namely before God, the Lord and Father." [Message for the World Day of Peace, 08.12.1991]. "It is impossible to have peace without prayer, the prayer of all, each one in his own identity and in search of the truth. One must see in this the wonderful manifestation of that unity which binds us together, beyond the differences and divisions which are known to all ... Every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every person." [to the Roman Curia, 22.12.1986].

- 2.4.14. We are pilgrims to the Divine: "On this earth we are pilgrims to the Absolute and Eternal, who alone can save and satisfy the heart of the human person." (To Buddhists and Shintoists, Rome, 20.02.1980) "We are all pilgrims on the path of seeking to do God's will in everything... Let goodwill and peace govern our relations! Let us always be willing to speak to each other and listen to each other." (to the people of Gambia, 23.02.1992). "God would like the developing history of humanity to be a fraternal journey in which we accompany one another toward the transcendent goal which he sets for us... Either we walk together in peace and harmony or we drift apart and ruin ourselves and others." (Assisi, 27.10.1986). "May God guide us and bless us as we strive to walk together, hand in hand, and build together a world of peace!" (at Delhi, 01.02.1986) "We are all pilgrims to the dawn of the new millennium: may it be a dawn marked by God's peace." (Message to the Prayer Meeting at Assisi, 07.09.1994.)

2.5 *The Pilgrim Church with the Pilgrim People of God:* The perspectives of the Church on other religions, as emerged from the documents of II Vatican Council and evolved through the teachings of the two Popes, may be summarised as follows:

- 2.5.1. The entire humanity is one in the sense that it has one source and one goal, God; all human beings are incorporated into the one plan of God, for the one divine Spirit is

operating in all human persons, and hence in all cultures and religions.

- 2.5.2. There is a rich diversity in the ways in which the Spirit transforms the lives of people, and hence there are diverse forms of religious expression. The Church respects this diversity and perceives in these forms seeds of the divine Word and rays of the divine Truth. Hence the Church wants to respect them and promote the noble spiritual values contained in them.
- 2.5.3. Church understands the entire history of humanity as the process of the ongoing dialogue of God with humanity. Through inter-religious dialogue we open ourselves to one another, and thereby we listen to God's dialogue with humanity, and let God present in our midst.
- 2.5.4. God's universal dialogue with humanity has reached its fullest manifestation in Jesus Christ. Christ is the Word incarnate, the sole Redeemer and the normative centre of history. Apart from Christ there is no salvation. Believers of all religions are associated with the paschal mystery in a way that is known to God alone.
- 2.5.5. God brings about salvation in Christ only through the Church, the mystical body of Christ. All those who are being saved through the work of the Spirit are being saved through the grace of Christ operating through the Church. Church is the God-willed ordinary means of salvation and hence the true religion. In this sense, without the Church there is no salvation. Believers of all religions are implicitly oriented to the Church.
- 2.5.6. This means not just a privilege, but much more a missionary responsibility for Christians to share the God-given faith in Christ with others in a credible way. Through evangelization Church lays bare the seeds of the divine Word hidden in other religions and frees from all taints of evil the elements of truth and grace found in them, for these elements are a preparation for the Gospel. All human persons, the entire creation with all cultures and religions, are being restored in Christ the only saviour of humanity.
- 2.5.7. However there should be no coercion or undue persuasion in the evangelising process. Instead, Christians must respect

the salvific action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the believers of other religions. Dialogue is the new way of being Church today. Accepting the other as the other and respecting the differences between religions Christians should endeavour to acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods, as well as the social and cultural values of other religions. Believers of different religions are like spiritual pilgrims on a fraternal journey in which we accompany one another towards God, our only goal.

- 2.5.8. Dialogue is a matter of new relationships in the integration process of the divine Spirit. God's Spirit recreates this world anew and through interreligious collaboration believers of all religions participate in the divine work of promoting peace and justice, solidarity and freedom. Integral human liberation is the meeting point of religions; this is expressed specifically in the concern for the poor. And in prayer all believers experience the inner movement of the Spirit and deeper bond of union.

3. Church and other Religions in the Asian Context

- 3.1. It may be good to place these theological perspectives of the Church in the pluricultural and multireligious context of Asia. It is a historical fact that most of these perspectives have evolved in the West. For centuries Europe had a mono-religious heritage. There has been hardly any possibility for the European Christians to live in a spontaneous dialogical relationship with believers of other religions. The theological perspectives and pastoral models developed over the centuries evolved out of this monocultural matrix. It is true that with II Vatican Council the Church opened some of its windows to the wider world and changed many of its traditional exclusivist attitudes to other religions. However the dominant theology of the Council was shaped by the theologians of the West. The conciliar theology did not evolve out of a lived experience of centuries of neighbourly relations with believers of other religions. When the language and worldview of a mono-religious continent is transferred to the situation of a multi-religious continent,

it does meet with certain resistance. When the theological perspectives of the Council and the teachings of the popes are applied to the multi-religious situation of Asian countries one can notice a certain critique coming from the pluralistic situation of Asia. This does not mean that the Magisterium of the Church is put into question, but it calls for a renewed sensitivity to the diversity of religions and plurality of cultures in Asia and Africa, and in most parts of the today's world as well. The view that 'dialogue is the new way of being Church today' (Paul VI) is specially valid for the Church in her presence and mission in a world that is increasingly becoming conscious of diversities in ways of faith and life. Dialogue is a process of listening and speaking. It is important to listen to the other, to the partner in inter-religious dialogue. We Christians have therefore to listen to the questions which our brothers and sisters of another religious community would put to us on the perspectives of the Church on other religions. The following are some of the reactions of our dialogue-partners in this regard. They would ask us Christians:

- 3.1.1. We welcome the openness that you have developed recently towards us and appreciate the world-wide initiatives to promote inter-religious dialogue and fellowship. But we are not sure if you really take us as equal partners in inter-religious dialogue, as co-pilgrims towards the one goal.
- 3.1.2. It is a great vision to perceive the power of the divine Logos and the presence of the divine Spirit in all religions. But how come you see in our religions only 'seeds of the Logos' and 'rays of the Truth', only a 'secret presence of God' often mixed with 'taints of evil', awaiting the Christian missionary for unfolding and purification? (cf. 1.2.5-6; 2. 3. 4.)
- 3.1.3. You are basically very positive in describing religions as the 'expressions of the longing for God', and as 'the articulation of the questions about the profound mysteries of life'. But on what basis can you assert that Christianity is the 'only true religion', and the 'ordinary means of salvation'? Can there be an objective criterion for the distinction you make; other religions are like a blind search for God; Christianity is the revealed religion; in other religions only human search

is articulated, but in Christianity 'God comes in person to speak to the human of Himself. (cf. 1.2.2., 2.2.4., 2.3.3., 2.3.6, 2.3.7., 2.4.4., 2.4.8.)

- 3.1.4. It is a beautiful insight that the history of humanity is the process of the agelong dialogue of God with humanity. God continues to speak to human persons and communities in diverse ways. How can you discover in Jesus Christ the 'fulfilment' of this revelatory dialogue, and in Christianity the 'fullness' of revelation? Is there anything absolute in the flux of history? On what score can one establish an absolute norm that determines the validity of all religious experiences? (cf. 2.3.6, 2.3.7., 2.4.5., 2.4.7.)
- 3.1.5 You speak to us with a high sense for the universal history of humanity. Our traditional religions too have a long history and rich heritage. We have our sacred Texts and venerable masters. Any attempt from the Christian side to underrate them or to interpret them as predisposition for Christian faith or preparation for the Gospel will be resisted (cf. 2.3.5, 2.3.7, 2.4.1).
- 3.1.6 You concede today that believers of other religions can be saved, and even non-believers. But you are not yet prepared to respect the other religions as means of salvation. You are afraid that the saving figures of other religions would get undue validity and consequently your faith in Christ would lose its unconditional prominence. How can you respect us as dialogue partners if you are not respecting our salvation-experiences in their identity and diversity? (cf. 1.2.4, 2.4.7, 2.3.5).
- 3.1.7 You have rightly perceived a universal truth: there is no genuine dialogue without love. But how can you love your neighbour as yourself, if you are not open to respect the God of your neighbour? Genuine respect for the other demands sensitivity to the religious sentiments of the other and acceptance of the other as other (cf. 1.2.8, 2.3.8, 2.4.4, 2.4.10).
- 3.1.8 You understand that the work of the Spirit is universal, limited neither by space nor by time. This could help you to respect the otherness of the other. But you tend to consider the classical European culture as a superior culture

and as the norm to measure the validity of other cultures. Do you not in a subtle way identify Christianity with the western culture? (cf. 2.2.2, 2.3.8, 2.4.4, 2.4.6).

3.1.9 By proclaiming the fundamental right to religious freedom to the nations the Church has done a tremendous service to humanity. You have specifically made it clear that evangelization will be free from any sort of coercion or dishonest or undue persuasion. At the same time you seem to uphold the old axiom in a new version: without the Church there is no salvation! You advocate that belonging to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, is an essential condition for salvation. Does it not mean a subtle but powerful theological compulsion with absolute demands on the conscience of peoples? (cf. 2.3.7, 2.4.8, 2.4.9).

3.1.10 We wholeheartedly welcome the Christian initiatives to collaborate with us in bringing about justice and peace in all realms of life in all parts of the world. We hope that through these joint efforts many wounds of the past could be healed and a new civilisation of love would be established. But genuine collaboration is possible only if we meet as equal partners, totally free from the vested interests and hidden motives of any particular religious community. For this we would expect from Christians that they meet us without a religious-election consciousness and superiority-feeling in God's plan of salvation. Let us walk together as co-pilgrims and work together in God's new creation 'accompanying one another towards doing God's will in everything' [John Paul II] (cf. 2.1.5, 2.3.9, 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.11).

3.2 The Asian religious psyche resonates with a pluralistic way of thinking and living. Traditional Christian theology as it evolved in the West cannot easily accommodate pluralistic patterns of perception. This is the basic reason for the conflicts which arise in the encounter of western theology with the East. The questions raised above have their source in three spiritual insights which constitute a foundational experience of Asians:

3.2.1 The Divine is unfathomable Mystery. No name or form, no particular revelatory event or salvific experience, can exhaustively express this Mystery. The finite cannot be an adequate receptacle of the Infinite.

- 3.2.2 Experience of being grasped by this Mystery is an experience of personal or communitarian faith. Faith is the norm for the one who experiences it (*anubhava* is *pramanah*); a particular faith experience however cannot be made a norm for others who do not belong to this faith-community.
- 3.2.3. The primary expression of authentic faith is compassion (*karuna*). It is an attitude of being affected by the search and suffering of others and of being committed to accompany the other in the latter's search and to relieve suffering. Compassion evolves out of the experience of a deep unity with the totality of reality.
- 3.3. These critical questions and foundational insights of Asians must evoke a response in the theological pursuits of the Church at large, especially in Asia. We live in a new age of the spiritual evolution of humanity. People all over the world look for authentic sources of spirituality within and beyond traditional religions. It is a widespread phenomenon in the traditional Christian countries of the West that seekers go to the spiritual masters and religious Scriptures of Eastern religions in pursuit of a mystical experience of the Divine. It is a sign of the times which the Church has to discern. Awakening the mystic in the Church is an epochal need today. Spiritual encounter with believers of other religions should help Christians rediscover the mystical dimension of their faith in Christ. Only with a revitalisation of the mystical dimension can the Church have a credible presence in Asian countries, because the Asian religious psyche is fecund with mystical perspectives. This would make Christians increasingly tolerant towards others, for God is greater than all religions: *Deus semper major*! this would enable Christians to 'respect the mysterious action of the Divine Spirit' in each person and community, in each religion and culture. It is with this radical openness to the 'God-above God' (Meister Eckhart) that the Church should develop its attitudes to other religions. What evolves out of this process may be a theologico-anthropocentric perspective that is founded on a Christic experience in the Church. A careful reading of the addresses given by Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II to the Representatives of other religions during their visits to Asia and Africa as well as the

talks of the Pope at the Assisi Meeting, 1986, could inspire us to develop such open attitudes. These talks were given directly to believers of other religions in their immediate presence—a reality that is constitutive of day-to-day life in Asian countries; hence they show a greater sensitivity to the religious sentiments of others.

Without getting into details a possible line of theological perspectives relevant for Asia may be indicated as follows.

- 3.3.1. There is a theological unity of humanity: one source, one universal plan of salvation, which however continues to remain a mystery for all. God's Love is operative in all peoples; God's Word is present in all cultures. The spiritual history of humanity is the history of the ongoing dialogue between God and humanity. This dialogue finds expression in diverse forms and in different intensities. In its evolutionary process there are peak moments (*kairos*) in which the divine undercurrents of history surface with a tremendous power of grace and a radical demand for a new way of life. At such moments the divine Spirit breaks into the human in a unique way. It may be articulated through a person or event, Scripture or symbol; this divine breakthrough is received in faith by a believing community. This is the origin of religion. In this sense every religion contains elements of divine revelation and offers ways of salvation.
- 3.3.2. Through inter-religious dialogue and collaboration we, as believers of different religions, open ourselves deeply to this dimension of divine dialogue: we listen to the divine Word spoken through human words; we become alert to what the Spirit is telling us today. When we thus listen to one another we listen to the Spirit of God, operating in our midst. Thus we let God be present in our midst. We recognise the differences in our faith-convictions, and respect the other as other. In this process we realise that we are pilgrims of the Absolute, seeking God in human hearts and accompanying one another in this ongoing search. In this sense the truly spiritual person of the future will be an interreligious person: being deeply rooted in one's religious faith one is open to the Spirit that 'blows where it wills'.
- 3.3.3. It is on this pilgrim's way that we Christians share with others our experience of God in Jesus Christ. We share

with them what Christ means to us: the Word made flesh, the outpouring of the Spirit, the Saviour of the world, the compassionate face of God turned towards humanity. We know, especially in dialogue with others, that no such expression can fully articulate 'the breadth and length, the height and depth of the mystery of the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge' (Eph. 3, 18). Hence we should avoid all sorts of exclusivist language. Confident that his Spirit is leading us to the 'depth of God' we share our faith in Christ to others in a non-aggressive way that is conducive to an inner encounter with the Gospel of Christ. What is important in communicating Christ in the process of the inter-religious inner pilgrimage is an entry into communion with the unfathomable mystery of the inner-Trinitarian life of the Divine.

3.3.4. A Christian entering into dialogue with others is not just an individual, but member of a world-wide community of those who have been gripped by this saving experience of Jesus the Christ. This community, the Church, finds itself in a common pilgrimage with believers of other religions 'in pursuit of God's will in everything'. It is a living sign of the evolving Kingdom of God and a movement that articulates the presence of the divine Spirit revealed in Christ in this world. If the Church tries to meet others by asserting a sort of absolute superiority over them or making exclusive claims in the economy of salvation it cannot speak to the hearts of the people in Asia.

3.3.5. Concern for integral human liberation is the central concern of all religions; they all have some sort of a soteriological orientation. Hence the human person — especially the suffering human person — is the meeting point of religions. More than words used in dialogue can works of involvement for human welfare bind the hearts and minds of believers of diverse religions. In continents like Africa and Asia, where millions of the poor live and a rich plurality of religions is still vibrant, inter-religious collaboration would bring forth the liberative potential of each religion. In joint commitment to justice and peace, freedom and fellowship religious beliefs rally around acute human issues. Christians could always uphold the primacy of the value of compassion, since

the central concern of Jesus had been integral human liberation: Jesus relativised even religion in favour of the human person.

- 3.3.6. Three extreme positions have to be avoided in a culture of dialogue: one is that all religions are the same, another is that one's own religion is the norm for others, and the third is that my religion is just one among the many. (i) Religions are not the same, and hence they are not equal; one religion should not be compared with another and the validity of one religious experience cannot be determined by that of another. Each religion is a unique articulation of God-man dialogue.' Precisely because they differ on certain important points', there is need of encounter and exchange. (ii) Similarly, when one religion claims the God-given status of being the absolute norm for all others, no genuine dialogue is possible, because believers of that religion are not prepared to respect others. How can the culturally conditioned experience of one religion be an unconditional norm for the validity of others? This question is of vital importance on the Asian landscape of religions and cultures. (iii) A rash judgement that 'my religion is just one among the many' would only betray the true significance of religious experience. Faith is an experience of being gripped by the Divine in a particular instance; the language of faith is an ecstatic language, a love language. As an expression of intense faith-experience such a language has its validity. Hence 'my religion is something uniquely liberative for me; it is not just one among the many. The problem arises when such a language of faith-intimacy is taken out of its experience-context and converted to a dogmatic assertion claiming to be the norm for others.

On the World Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi, 27.10.1986, the Holy Father beautifully described the central concern of a dialogical relation among believers of all religions: "Let us see in this pilgrimage an anticipation of what God would like the developing history of humanity to be: a fraternal journey in which we accompany one another towards the transcendent goal which He sets for us.

Christ and the Indian Mystical Tradition — Swami Abhishiktananda

G. Gispert-Sauch

George Gispert-Sauch SJ studies carefully Swami Abhishiktananda's Spiritual Journal and describes how Swamiji struggled to articulate his faith in Christ in correlation to the Upanishadic experience. For Swami Abhishiktananda the intense pursuit of the mystical scriptures of India was a spiritual pilgrimage into the 'cave of the heart', where he discovered the deeper meaning of the I AM statement of Jesus. His probing into the mystical consciousness of Jesus is a critique on the preoccupation of the traditional theology to stick to 'names' and forms', and an invitation to explore relentlessly the unfathomable mystery of Christ in the light of the insights of the Indian rishis. G. Gispert-Sauch teaches theology at Vidyaajoti, Delhi.

Among those who have been interested in the Hindu-Christian meeting perhaps none stands out with such radical commitment and personal insight as Swami Abhishiktananda (1910-1973). He was not a technical Sanskritist analysing and comparing texts. He was a monk seeking the spiritual experience underlying the texts and discovering it within himself while he attempted to articulate it in the language of the Upanishads. His inner struggles in this enterprise are recorded in his spiritual journal the English edition of which is being published this year by the ISPCK, Delhi¹, a document of great significance not only for the biography of Abhishiktananda but also in itself, as a book of Indian spirituality and a primary resource for the dialogue between Hinduism and the Christian faith.

Having arrived in India on the first anniversary of its independence, August 15th 1948, Dom Henri Le Saux, as he was then known, spent a quarter of a century on a voyage of spiritual

1. *Ascent to the Depth of the Heart*, Delhi: ISPCK 1998. The Diary was first published in its French original by O. E. I. L., Paris, in 1986 with a long preface by R. Panikkar. The English translation and edition keeps that preface and adds an introduction by Sr. Sara Grant.

Discovery of India that shook the foundation of his faith, to purify it and make him live by *fides sola* to a degree that not even Luther would have visualised. Yet he remained ever loyal to the God he had first encountered on the face of Christ.

The Journal

Two words about the nature of the Journal or Diary. The title of the book is of course not from the Swami himself, but it does suggest the main theme of his spiritual itinerary. The goal of his journey in India was not the peak of Mount Kailash, in the Himalayas, the traditional focal point of Hindu pilgrimages, but the depth of his own heart, the substratum of the human personality where the Presence of the Divine Absolute resides. He called it often, following a Vedic metaphor, the cave of the heart, which has its cosmic sacrament in the caves of the Himalayas where traditionally rishis and sannyasis have sought, and still seek, inner purification and awakening to the Infinite. The cave is also suggested by the dark "wombs" (*garbha-grha*) of our Indian temples where the Deity resides and where our monk, who had renounced all signs to seek the One beyond signs had spent long nights of entasis and awareness of the atman. To this "depth" of the heart we "ascend" through an "awakening".

Like the French edition which it largely follows, the *Ascent* contains only a selection of the Diary of the Swami. Economic and other constraints have advised against the full publication of the text which evidently has many repetitions and is in places unintelligible. The selection however is representative and the criteria for the choice have been practical and not theological: to keep the book to a manageable size (even as it is the book has over 400 pages) and to avoid tiresome repetitions which could cause ennui even in the mystically inclined. One may add that the English edition, though a translation, has many points of advantage over the printed French text. Published in India, it could rely on wider resources for the interpretation of difficult passages and allusions, with references both to Sanskrit and Tamil words and thought patterns. A direct check with the manuscript recommended a few corrections and additions so as to clarify some points which in the French edition remained obscure on account of the editing. Above all, the meticulous and long labour of Fr James Stuart who had battled with Swami's manuscripts for many years

has ensured that this version of the Diary gives us a more satisfactory text.

We may ask ourselves what was the purpose why Abhishiktananda kept a diary for so many years and preserved it so carefully. For all his contempt for theology it is clear that the "intimate journal" (as the French edition calls it) was also a theological journal. This does not mean necessarily that every word in the diary expresses Swamiji's personal theology; perhaps it does not even adequately give us the theological thinking at the time of writing; rather it contains problems, insights, flashes, reflections on which he would eventually work to further the task of an Indian theology for an Indian Church. In fact, when comparing some of his published writings with the entries in the Diary we see that the Diary served as a quarry, as it were, from which he extracted material for his books, which he then chiselled in a more conscious and personal manner.

I do not know if Swamiji ever intended the Diary to be published, although he did consider it a valuable record. It was not only a help in recalling his personal itinerary but also a legacy to the Church and to the human family. It contains the fruit of his experiment and his long life as a Christian sannyasi inserted in the Hindu milieu. In this sense the Diary has an "apostolic" meaning not indeed as an instrument of propaganda but as showing one way where the Hindu and the traditional Christian traditions meet, struggle, accept one another and yet remain ever in tension.

One must approach a diary with a certain caution. A diary offers us a glimpse into the heart of a person, but it is not the heart itself. By definition a diary is a text that belongs to the flow of time and records more or less completely the thoughts, insights, moods and reactions of its author to daily circumstances. Its direct *viṣaya* or "grazing ground" are the famous *manōvṛttis* of Yogasutra 1.1.2, the "fluctuations of the mind", what surfaces to consciousness from the deepest recesses of the heart. Intimate as a diary may be, it still remains at the somewhat surface level of the articulated word. Sometimes one even plays in it the games we play with ourselves: we try ideas for a fit, so to say, we write out expressions of sentiments or of thought, to see if we recognise ourselves in them. However this does not mean that the diary is a fiction, a make-believe document. Abhishiktananda's Diary does record intimate struggles of its author, and the way in which he

lived his faith. But we need to discern the faith and the heart of the author beneath the ripples of the recorded experiences and reactions to them.

Nāmarūpa vs. Reality?

This is precisely one of the great concerns articulated in the Diary itself: the desire to go beyond (or below) the *nāmarūpa* to Reality itself. In line with the Upanishadic tradition, Abhishikta-nanda had a certain disdain for the form and for all theological formulation, for all mental exercise: these belong to the realm of *māya* that hides rather than reveals Truth. In this he was perhaps at the antipodes of Hans Urs von Balthasar, for whom the form reveals the divine.² Abhishiktananda writes:

Nothing that is on the conceptual level has absolute value. Now, Christian dogmas are conceptual-mythical expressions of the "mystery". Christ's *namarupa* necessarily explodes, but the Church wants to keep us virtually at the level of the *namarupa* (24.4.72, p. 346).³

All *namarupas*, Hindu as well as Christian, are stumps of candle that we light in the high noon — while the sun is at its zenith! (10.6.72, p. 355).

This opposition between *namarupa* and Reality is more stressed in Swamiji's last articulation of the spiritual experience and surely derives from the Vedantin world view, although it also has roots in the Christian mystical tradition. In the Vedanta it appears as the distinction between the *vyavaharika* experience of the world of the senses, of multiplicity, history, creation, and the "supremely real" world or the *paramartha*, the Absolute Reality, the world of Truth. For Swami, as for the Advaita tradition, these two worlds have their own reality but in a dialectical tension so that when the Absolute Truth dawns in the heart the world of multiplicity and history loses its significance, is recognised as false and is therefore negated — like the boat a person uses to

2. See the article of the Revd. Ben Quash, "Mysticism and Mission" in VJTR 62, April 1998, pp. 228–238.

3. All references to the diary will cite the day-month-year, and the page number of the English translation, very kindly put at my disposal in the page-made proofs by its co-translator and editor Rev. Fr. James Stuart of the Brotherhood of the Ascended Christ, Delhi. I am grateful to him for his kindness.

cross the river and then discards, to borrow a classical Indian comparison.

There is however another way of looking at the relation of our conscious experience to Reality. In fact, if we go by the Index printed at the end of the book, the frequent use of the term *namarupa* is concentrated in the last years of Swamiji's life (April 72 to July 73, although there are some earlier uses). A look at his biography based on his correspondence confirms the data of the Diary. There the first reference to *namarupa* is indexed for May 1972.

Earlier, Abhishiktananda had used the term *lila* to which perhaps he gives a more positive and more holistic interpretation. *Lila* is the display of the Spirit.

The Spirit freely displays his *lila* in me as in every creature. The Spirit, the mysterious impersonal person, in whom my ego is lost. Accept the reality, that is, the fact that my ego is immersed in the Spirit! (...). And the Spirit in his own time will cause to arise in the dawning of my soul, the Supreme Ego, the "I am Brahma" [*Brahma aham asmi*], the true I [*aham*] (1.6.52, p. 39).

This is recorded early in his life in India, in the context of his memory of the meeting with Ramana Maharshi.

Not only is *lila* the play of the Spirit, but it is revelatory of the Absolute.

There is in us no action, however ordinary it may seem, which is not derived from and identified with the divine play (*lila*), and the divine *lila* is nothing else than God. India has had a marvellous insight in the essential Divine Presence.....(8.6.52, p. 43).

This awareness of a world that reveals the divine Presence is strong in him at this time. In a passage of spiritual lyricism he looks at the world and its activities as sacraments of the divine:

But the yogi comes out of his cave, looks at the city and the temple, hears laughter and singing, and his heart sings with the songs brought to him by the loudspeaker, and with the bird song and the temple bells, and with the noise of motors—that is God, isn't it? How would the locomotive move forward if the divine Act did not "manifest itself" in it? — And his heart sings of what his ears hear, and his heart sings of what his

eyes see, the sun that rises in the morning, the clouds that turn crimson at its setting in the evening, people and things, the hermitages on the mountains, the towers of the temple, the roofs of the houses, the distant mystery of the hills and of roads along which the evening lights are moving. And his heart sings of the breath of wind that caresses his face, of the earth that upholds him and is felt by his feet. (same date, p. 45).

However, he is aware that without renunciation, without self-denial and solitude, there is no "recovery" of the world as transparent to the Divine:

And the yogi is as much with God in the song of *lila* as in the song of the *kevala* (total solitude). But who would even sing the varied songs of the *lila*, if he has not first sung in the solitude of his heart and soul the unique song of the *kevala*? For it is from this *kevala* that the *lila* wells up. There is no sorrow, nor suffering, which at its deepest centre, in its own most essential point, does not contain the deep divine joy and the divine *lila* which is its origin and fulfilment. (All the above quotations in the context of the feast *sanctissimae Trinitatis*).

Christ and the Upanishads

What is the place of Christ and of the Christian faith in this cultural world-view? We find apparently contradictory statements which may or may not complement one another. Swamiji's problem was how to account for the Truth of the Upanishads and the Christian Truth. They seem to exclude one another. And yet at least at the end of his life it was clear to him that "the experience of the Upanishads is true, *I know it!*" (11.5.72, p. 348). (The same confident affirmation is found in the letter to Madame Odette-Despeigne on 25.5.72 *Letters* p. 268.)⁴ The 'ifs' of his earlier writings ("If the Upanishads are true," or "If Ramana Maharshi is true...") have given way to a confident testimony based on his own experience.

Christ and the Christian faith are for him obviously true, but Christ belongs to history, and therefore to the *vyavaharika* world. Abhishiktananda is aware that his original faith contains an absolute

4. Swami Abhishiktananda, *His life told through his letters*, ed. by James Stuart. Delhi; ISPCK, rev. ed., 1995.

Truth that goes beyond historical expressions and doctrinal formulations. The problem is how to hold together the non-duality of the Vedanta experience and this "absolute" Truth of his faith. In a sense Abhishiktananda is at the opposite end of the pluralist in theology of religions: the pluralist considers all religions to have a relative or partial truth, one-sided, that can be complemented by the truth of other religions in a sort of spiritual jigsaw puzzle. For Abhishiktananda "The Upanishads are true, *I know it!*" And this therefore must create a problem: How can the Christian faith and the Upanishads be both absolutely True? Should we reduce the Christian dogma to a *vyavaharika* truth, since it essentially refers to history, and therefore a truth to be transcended by the realization of the oneness of Brahman? In this case the Incarnation of God in Jesus would be an attractive avatara that inspires us to discipleship during our historical existence but that would be negated, *bādhita* Sankara would say, in the sight of the Supreme Truth,

This would not do for the Christian sannyasi who never quite lost his foothold on the Christian faith tradition, much as Monchanin feared he would. There surely was, for him, an aspect of the Christian faith that belongs to a *vyavaharika* articulation that needs to be transcended. To this belongs the realm of the articulation of truth and the sacramental and popular practices. To this belongs also the "historical" truths about Jesus. There is equally a *namarupa* aspect of the Vedanta theology but that too will be transcended. The problem is what remains of the Christian faith if anything, when one reaches the Upanishadic climax of *aham Brahma asmi*? It would seem that Swamiji's insight is in the interiorization of the mystery of Jesus. Jesus is not just the historical truth that was available to the disciples and to others that met him on the roads of Palestine. The deepest mystery of Jesus is ultimately the Johannine *I AM* which, regardless of its Old Testament background, Abhishiktananda reinterprets as the pure being of non-duality. He uses in this context a stanza of a late Upanishad dear to him.

*Vedāham etam puruṣam mahantam
adityavarṇam tamasaḥ parastat
tam eva viditva atī mṛtyum eti
na anyā pantha vidyate ayanaya*

(I have come to know that mighty Person
Golden like the Sun, beyond all darkness;
by knowing Him one transcends death,
There is no other way for reaching the goal) [Svet. Up.].

This was quoted on the feast of the Ascension, 35 years after his solemn profession as a benedictine monk. For Swamiji the saving mystery can only emerge from the cave, from the depth of consciousness. "Christianity believes that salvation comes from outside, through thoughts, rites, 'sacraments'. The level of *namarupa*."

But actually, in truth,

Christianity is first of all upanishad, correlation, not direct teaching. Direct teaching only gives *namarupas*. Correlation causes the spark of experience to flash, that alone gives fulfillment...

We awake to what the religious person calls the presence of God by disinterested action, by love free from selfishness, by looking at others with pure eyes.

The pure of heart will see God. The heart detached from all self-seeking.

The pure act of love or service, That is what awakens one to oneself. That is what awakens one to God, not to the God of the *namarupas* but to God in himself!

It is on this inner experience that all *real* religion should be based, not on ideas that come and are passed on to us from outside (28.5.1972, pp. 351-2).

Awakening to the Absolute

If the Christological inclination of Swamiji was to stress the non-duality of the Father and Jesus, according to the Johannine formula so often quoted in India, "I and the Father are one", his perception of the saving action of Jesus focused on his *awakening*, his awareness of the Father's intimate presence to him rather than on any theology of redemption or even liberation "from outside". In a sense he would stress more the saving value of the Jordan experience than the cross—except that the cross-resurrection is precisely the culmination of his experience of the Father.

For him therefore the true place of the Divine Presence is not the field of history which cannot be ultimately and eternally

true, but the field of interiority, where the magnetic needle which is the mind, is fixed on its true North pole, *Sat* or Being / Truth. Had not Sankara said, *yadviṣaya buddhir na viabhicarati tat sat; yadvisaya buddhir vyabhicarati tad asat?* (Being / Truth is that from which the mind cannot be distracted; Non-being / Untruth is that from which the mind is distracted?) [*Gita bhasya*, ad 2. 16]. Revelation therefore takes place in the interiority of the seeker, and in his I AM Jesus reveals to us the depth and authenticity of our existence.

It is not surprising then that he looked at Christ as the Sat-Purusha.⁵ The Awakening of one man [Jesus] includes somehow the Awakening of all.

If we want Christ's saving work to be universal, this saving work cannot be sought in any *namarupa*: death, sacrifice, redemption, resurrection ... There is in truth only one act by which Jesus — every human being — goes to the Father (to use biblical terminology): *it is the act of awakening* (italics added). As soon as you awake, on account of the essential connectedness of all human beings, you awake with, on behalf of all (2.2.1973, p. 369).

The paschal mystery is an impressive symbol of the awakening of the Human Being to himself, within time and outside time, plunged, immersed in creation and yet independent of creation. The Purusha is, simply there, like the *Atman*, *Sat*, *Brahman*, once the human being awakens to himself (17.2.73, p. 372).

In language reminiscent of Eckhart's Abhishiktananda contemplates the mystery of the Trinity and the birth of Christ as taking place in the depth of each one's heart:

The Trinity: a threefold depth when the laser penetrates to the deepest point of my being. A threefold depth of mystery, not an idea received from without, in the abstract, but an experience of my own consciousness which the Master's revelation nevertheless helps one to formulate...

The name of these depths: *sahatvam, vaktram, gudham*.

5. Title of an incomplete essay on Christology dated January 1973 and published with appropriate extracts from the Journal in *Intériorité et révélation. Essais théologiques*, by Henri Le Saux. O. S. B., [Swami Abhishiktananda] Sisteron: Presence, 1982. Other titles for Christ dear to him are *guru, jñānī*.

—*Sahatvam*: the mystery of being-together, of relationship of the Spirit.

—*Vaktram*: the face manifested in the word-*vak*, the Purusha.

—*Gūḍham*: the absolutely ineffable Ground, the Father.

God is communion—God is Word and face—God is mystery. I am communion. I am word and face. I am mystery. Each human “I” is communion, word and face, mystery. The whole of creation is communion, word and face, mystery. *Sahatvam, vaktram, gudham*. (3.7. 72 p. 357.)

And one week later:

Christ is not a *namarupa*. His true name is *I AM*. He is not encountered in a theologoumenon, nor even in any noeme. He can only “be” in the mystery of my being. (10.7.72, *ibid*).

Abhishiktananda interprets the significance of the words Abba, Amma, Ba, Ma in terms of *close relationship*, not primarily of generation. These words “designate not the father-mother, but the person close to the child whose relationship has for it an absolute value, who is its *pratishtha* (support), its *loka*. God the Father (or Mother) is in the first place that, much more than the abstract symbol of one who begets” (10.7.72 p 358) This is one of the foundations for interpreting the experience of Jesus in terms of Advaita:

The experience of intimacy, of immanence, or rather of non-distance (there is no ‘gulf!’) which Jesus had under the sign of *ABBA* was known in India under the sign of *atma/Brahman: aham Brahma asmi...*

Abba, the mystery of non-distance!

And it is to this “non-distance” with the Lord, with the one we call God, that Jesus is inviting us.

YHWH: Abba (my father)...

India has been so fascinated by this non-distance that it has called it non-duality, and even *ekatvam* (oneness). For how can we distinguish anything at all, anyone at all, in a divine non-distance? And it is this non-distance that Jesus reveals among human beings, re-veals=unveils, shows and also effects —the sign of community in the same bread. (25.8.72, p. 359).

This sense of non-distance, of communion, is what leads him to present the primacy of love as the Christian experience:

Christian experience is really the experience of advaita lived out in human communion. And that is what the Trinity is. But we sought to escape this *fire* by deifying formulas and institutions. Christian experience is the Spirit who makes human beings to be brothers and sisters and to gather around the unique, cosmic, archetypal Purusha, of whom Jesus is the preferred expression for an entire segment of humanity. But we should not base an "apodictic" theology on this essentially relative mental foundation (a particular myth), in terms of which the Gospel has been thought and expressed. The Gospel lived in the Spirit. The Spirit alone is important. No form can hold the Spirit, it passes through them all. (3.8.72, p. 358).

Three Questions

I think Fr J. Dupuis has presented the drama of Swamiji's inner struggle with great honesty, clarity and insight.⁶ I find that the questions he puts at the end of his Introduction are valid even today.

The first regards the relation of experience to all forms of expression. Are the two not interrelated? Is not all experience always involved with "name and form" and are names and forms, in spite of their limitedness and poverty, totally unable to disclose the Absolute? Sankara at any rate did not think so and developed a philosophy of *lakṣaṇārtha* ('meanings that are aimed at, implied'). But Sankara of course was a theologian, and theologians are deemed to banalise and falsify the pure revelatory experience. But the Upaniṣads themselves, at least in some of their strands, offer a more positive relationship between experience and expression:

Now, it has elsewhere been said: 'Verily, there are two Brahmas to be meditated upon: sound and non-sound (*śabda* and *aśabda*). Now, non-sound is revealed (only by sound'.⁷ It is true that the Upaniṣad at once identifies the "sound-Brahma" as the syllable Om—and this surely is the reason why Hume has translated *śabda* as sound rather than word. But does not Om

6. Cf. his introduction to *Interiorite et revelation. Essais theologiques*. By Henri Le Saux. O. S. B. [Swami Abhishiktananda]. Sisteron: Editions Presence. 1982, pp. 9–34.

7. Maitri Upanishad, 6:22, trans. R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*.

stand for all the Vedas in their multifarious enunciations? In short, words are not only veils that hide Reality; they are revelatory.

The second question is whether the experience of Jesus can be reduced to the Upanishadic AHAM BRAHMA ASMI (or the Johannine I AM, understood in an Upanishadic sense). Is there not a filial relationship inserted in Jesus' very experience of 'I AM,' so that even if he was able to really affirm an identity of nature with the Father (as the later Church would articulate it) he still remains ever the Son? If the I AM of Jesus is the Father's 'I AM' resounding in the depths of his conscience, does Jesus not respond personally to that I AM in total obedience? Abhishiktananda does say that relationship is precisely what the revelation of the Trinity tells us (see texts quoted above), but then with one stroke he may unsay what he has said by seeming at times to relegate the Trinity to a theologoumenon which must ultimately give way to the pure experience of the I AM. Abhishiktananda had earlier spoken of being-with (*sam-sat*) as the metaphysics necessarily imbedded in the experience of Jesus, but in the later part of the Diary he seems to leave no place for the *sam*—when he speaks of the supreme Vedantic experience of *Aham Brahma asmi*. We must ask again whether in spite of the limitations of language and of the imagination which always accompanies all our language, the Trinitarian faith of the Christian symbols and the Christian baptism can be treated as a mere *namarupa* which cannot lead us to the heart of Reality itself.

We note however another insight into the meaning of this relationship that comes somewhere in the middle of the Diary but which is found elsewhere also, to the very end: the certainty that the relations of the Divine are not abstract ideas but are lived in all meeting with the other at the very depths of our being. Here is a beautiful passage:

Jesus is the type par excellence of this passing into the Other. Whether we mean the Other as Father, or the Other as brother, they are inseparable (for it is always under the sign of the brother whom I see, that I say "Thou" to the Father whom I do not see).

Jesus is not an abstract idea, a memory that one might reach by means of intellectual formulations, deducing his "divinity", for example, with reference to a specific conceptual system,

He is the one-for-others, the one-who-has-passed-into-the-other, the paschal Being, who in his Resurrection has broken through all the limitations of his ego (spatial, temporal, etc.). Jesus is perceived existentially in the call of the other in the greatest depth of my being whether this other is the final mystery of my own personal mystery which is drawing me to the desert, or the brother who from outside calls me to God in himself (19.1.64. pp. 264-5).

The final question is whether the dialectical opposition between *vyavaharika* and *paramarthika* truth has not been overcome by the Easter experience of Jesus and the Apostles. When the creed confesses that "He sitteth at the right hand of the Father", is it not equivalently affirming an astonishing and metaphysically subversive news that the *vyavaharika* Jesus, a creature, historical and risen, has entered into the realm of the *paramarthika* with all his humanity, since he sits "at the right hand" of the Father? Admittedly this supreme destiny of Jesus remains shrouded in the mystery of the divine Reality and only a direct experience of God can avow the truth and the full meaning of this faith. But does not the chasm between history and the created world on the one hand and the Absolute Brahman on the other seem here to be bridged over? And does this not colour the Christian mystical experience as one of relating to God as Father, because we recognise in Jesus and the least of our brothers and sisters our own filiation? Many of the affirmations of the Diary and other writings of Abhishiktananda will, it seems to me, support this insight. When reading the Diary entries in the last years one wonders if he did not overinterpret the liberating experience under the influence of the Vedantic doctrine as recorded in the Upanishads. The Upanishads are true, one may believe, even if one has not experienced it. But there seem to be many possible ways of reading them.

Conclusion

I am aware that I have just scratched the surface of the Diary of Abhishiktananda and almost ignored his more carefully articulated articles. It is not possible at this moment to offer a satisfactory picture of the Christology of the Hindu-Christian sannyasi which itself underwent a remarkable evolution as he entered more deeply into the Indian world. Rich materials are now

available, even without counting the unpublished material in the archives of the Abhishiktananda Society in Delhi. We need a patient research into his way of understanding the Upanishadic tradition and his use of terminology deriving from the Indian tradition. His work, at any rate, springs from a heart full of faith, love and daring, and his venture will surely hasten the meeting of the two great traditions which he in a way represented. In the words of Fr. J. Dupuis,

Abhishiktananda was unable to transcend these antinomies (between advaita and Christianity) theologically. It was not his calling to construct their synthesis, and he left this responsibility to others. His greatness is elsewhere: It consists in having lived within himself the symbiosis of two traditions, the Hindu and the Christian, in so real a way that both became part of himself, without his ever being able to reject or disown either. His stubborn fidelity to his two faiths—or better, as he wrote one day, to the “two forms of a single ‘faith’ ”—make of him a prophetic figure in a time when the “marriage of East and West,” especially the encounter between the Christian mystery and Hindu mysticism—in full respect for their differences and without lurking ambiguity—is felt as an urgent need. His experience opens an important avenue towards a Christian theology of religious traditions that would be based on an existential encounter with these traditions in inter-religious dialogue.⁸

Vidyajyoti
Delhi

8. J. Dupuis, S. J., *Jesus Christ and the Encounter of World Religion*. Maryknoll: Orbis 1991, p. 90.

Christ and Religious Pluralism — Raimundo Panikkar

Dominic Veliath

Dominic Veliath SDB scans through the writings of Raimundo Panikkar with a focus "on" understanding the mystery of Christ in the living context of religious pluralism. Panikkar's constant concern has been to explore the significance of the cosmotheandric unity of reality. In this search he understands Christ as the principle of this unity, and finds in Jesus its historical manifestation. However Panikkar invites seekers to respect the uniqueness and accept the validity of other manifestations of this 'cosmic Christ'. With this the horizons of Christianity get broadened and the 'mission' of the Church receives new perspectives in encountering believers of other religions. Dominic Veliath teaches theology at Kristujyoti, Bangalore

1. Situating the Person

All theology, as the adage runs, is rooted in biography. Walter Capps, in his incisive article: *Towards a Christian Theology of the World's Religions*,¹ observes: "To come to terms with the very provocative suggestions and contentions of Raimundo Panikkar, one must place them within the intellectual and religious contexts in which they make most intrinsic sense"²

Keeping this in mind, a fair presentation of Dr. Panikkar's position comes up against many a methodological hurdle. R. Panikkar understands his intellectual elaboration as expressive of an existential risk — the risk of a person whose biological, historical and biographical circumstances have been incarnated in more than one culture.³ Dr. Panikkar's origins enabled him to live

1. W. H. Capps, "Towards a Christian Theology of the World's Religions", *Cross Currents* (Summer 1979), 156-168, 182

2. Ibid. 156.

3. R. Panikkar, "Philosophy as Life-Style, in A. Mercier, M. Svilar (eds.), *Philosophers on their own Works*, v. 4, (Bern, Frankfurt, Las Vegas 1978) 200-201.

and breathe within a Catholic and Hindu environment. Furthermore, he spent long years both in the West and in the East. As such, his attitude is not that of an outsider or a spectator, but of one who tries, as far as possible, to see a tradition from within.⁴

Academically, Raimundo Panikkar is one of the few theologians who possess a firsthand familiarity, not only with the gamut of Western philosophical and theological reflection⁵, but also the world of Hinduism⁶ and Buddhism.⁷

An important indicator of Dr. Panikkar's working context is his mystical apprehension of reality. Capps states: "His [Panikkar's] scholarship is largely a product of the transposition of mystical aspirations into methodological — yes, methodological objectives"⁸. He observes further: "The translation of a perennial mystical orientation into twentieth century religious genre seems ... to be his primary objective and lasting achievement"⁹.

His stance is characterized by two constantly recurrent motifs. The first of these is a yearning for holism. "My greatest urge was and is to encompass or rather to become—to live—reality to the fullest"¹⁰. He is a staunch opponent of all fragmentation, of all dualism. This attitude is articulated in his life-itinerary, which, *de facto* has been a movement towards wholeness. Dr. Panikkar's academic career began with the study of Physics and Chemistry; his interests then moved on to Philosophy, Theology, Hinduism, Buddhism and the Secularist tradition¹¹. He characterises his overall stance as that of one who "accepts the risk of conversion without alienation, assumption without repudiation, synthesis without syncretism or eclecticism."¹²

This universalization in the field of knowledge extended itself to other facets of his life. As Dr. Panikkar sees it, reflection must needs be crystallized into a life-style.

4. W. H. Capps, *ibid.*, 160–161.

5. This is evident from the different eulogies Panikkar has received.

6. See in this regard K. Mitra, *Catholicism and Hinduism. A Vedantic Investigation of Raimundo Panikkar's attempt at Bridge Building* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University 1980); R. Smet, *Le Probleme d'une Theologie Hindou-Chretienne selon Raymund Panikkar*. (Louvain 1983); IDEM, *Essai sur la Pensee de Raimundo Panikkar*, (Louvain 1981).

7. See for instance R. Panikkar, *The Silence of God*, (New York 1989).

8. W. Capps, *op. cit.*, 168. 9 *Ibid.*, 168, 182

10. R. Panikkar, "Philosophy as Life-Style", 199.

11. *Ibid.*, 199–200,

12. *Ibid.*, 201.

Primal Philosophy has then to crystallize in a life-style; or better, it is the expression of life itself as written down, or rather as spoken into reality by the style, the stylus of one's life. For me a Philosophy which deals only with structures, theories, ideas and shuns life, avoids praxis and represses feelings, is not only one-sided, since it leaves untouched other aspects of reality, but in addition is bad philosophy. Reality cannot be apprehended, understood, *realized* with a single organ or in only one of its dimensions.¹³

On the other hand, he considers equally important, the values of the concrete, of the human perspective, of this human person, whose greatest dignity is inseparable from his freedom and personal uniqueness.¹⁴

In the light of all this, it is obvious that a fair presentation of Raimundo Panikkar's highly nuanced vision is a daunting task. Any mere synthesis of his vision in width, which only attempts to integrate the different facets of his position at a given moment of his existential pilgrimage, would not only be inadequate and incomplete, but unintelligible. What is called for, is a presentation both in width and depth. His thought needs to be situated in the very process of its articulation.

2. The Question

Dr. Panikkar formulates one basic question which is multivoiced and multidimensional: How may one preserve one's own identity without falling into an undifferentiated collectivity? How may I be loyal to my own tradition and yet be open to another? How is it possible to be a loyal Christian owing allegiance to one particular religious tradition and at the same time open to the religious traditions of the world?¹⁵

The overall background in which he situates his answer is pluralistic. The context is cross-cultural, because human communities do not live in isolation; hence, in his view, any

13. *Ibid.*, 197-198.

14. See for instance R. Panikkar, "Sur l'Anthropologie du Prochain", in *L'Homme et Son Prochain. Actes du VIII Congrès des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française. Toulouse 6-9 Septembre 1956*, (Paris 1956), 228-231.

15. See for instance, R. Panikkar, *Salvation in Christ: Concreteness and Universality, the Supername*, [Santa Barbara 1972], 1-5.

problem not articulated in pluricultural parameters is at its very outset methodologically flawed.¹⁶

The philosophical underpinnings on which his response is based underscore the attempt and the need to overcome both the monistic and dualistic answer — one of the articulations of the fundamental problem of the "one and the many"¹⁷.

Epistemologically, the issue touches on the inadequacy of the subject-object paradigm of knowledge.¹⁸

3. The Cosmotheandric Intuition

Dr. Panikkar's answer can be synthesized in a basic focus, viz., the cosmotheandric intuition, an experience which can be explicated into the following elements:

3.1. *The Radical Relativity of Reality which is Trinitarian*

All reality has a trinitarian or cosmotheandric character. "It is simply an unwarranted overstatement to affirm that the trinitarian conception of the ultimate, and with it of the whole of reality, is an exclusively Christian insight or revelation."¹⁹

In Christian language — which is legitimate though not the unique way of true and meaningful discourse — I would say that the paradigm for this mystery is the *Trinity*. Rather than being a single centre, in which all ultimate human experiences converge in a unity (which ultimately could not avoid a certain monism), the Trinitarian paradigm allows for infinite diversity. The 'persons' of the Christian Trinity are infinitely different — nothing is finite in the Trinity — so that the very name of person (*pace Aquinas*) is equivocal. In this model the harmony or concord of a non-mathematical oneness is not broken.²⁰

The same can also be called advaitic or pluralistic.

In Indian language I would say that the paradigm for this Mystery is the *Advaitic* intuition, which refers to something which cannot be called either 'one' or 'two'. The Mystery

16. R. Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue", in F. Whaling [ed.], *The World's Religious Traditions*, [Edinburgh 1984], 202.

17. *Ibid.*, 202–203.

18. *Ibid.*, 202.

19. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Mankind, Icon-Person-Mystery*, [London 1973], VIII.

20. R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Towards an Ecumenical Christology*, [London 1981], 23.

towards which the religious experience of humankind tends, is neither the same nor different, neither one nor many, it is non-dualistic. It allows for *pluralism*, the modern secular word which I would use to express the same issue.²¹

Dr. Panikkar concludes that the Mystery includes the very person who reflects on it: We human beings ourselves are part of the mystery.

We cannot merely 'talk' about this Mystery in an objective and nominalistic way. Our discourse is not 'about' something that merely 'is' or 'is there'. Rather it is the disclosure of a reality that I *am* and you *are*. The Mystery is not objectifiable because 'you' and 'I' are constitutively part of it. Nor is it merely subjective because we the subjects are not all there²².

His understanding of the Trinity, (an articulation which he considers to be fully consonant with Catholic tradition), is nuanced in terms of his cosmotheandric intuition.

3.2. *The Father*

The Father is transcendence. Everything that the Father is, He transmits to the Son. The Father is not. Properly speaking, the Father has no self in the reflexive sense. The self of the Father is the Son. The Father is the 'I' whose 'Thou' is the Son.²³

3.3. *The Son*

The Son is the mediator, the creator, the redeemer, the glorifier. He 'is' and all other beings are insofar as they are from, with and through Him.²⁴

I am only reflecting the Christian tradition if I consider the symbol Christ as the symbol which 'recapitulates' in itself the Real in all its totality, created and uncreated. He is at the centre of the divine processions, 'being originated and originating' (in the consecrated language, being begotten and co-inspiring), at the centre of time, gathering in himself the three times and being present throughout in each case in the corresponding way, namely at the beginning, at the end and

21. *Ibid.*, 23-24.

22. *Ibid.*, 24.

23. R. Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Mankind, Icon-Person-Mystery*, [London 1973], 46-47.

24. *Ibid.*, 51.

in between — at the centre of all the realms of being: the divine, the angelic, the human, the corporeal, the material. There is not a single 'type' of reality which is not represented in Christ²⁵.

Consequently, creation "is" insofar as it participates in the Son. Every being is a christophany²⁶. Furthermore "Man is more than 'man'; he is a theandric mystery."²⁷

3.4. *The Spirit*

The Spirit of the Father and the Son is neither an 'I' who speaks, nor a 'Thou' to whom someone speaks. The Spirit unites and distinguishes Father and Son²⁸. The Spirit provides the only true perspective on reality. "The inversion that the Spirit brings about is total. The Spirit teaches man that he is not an I (*ego*) but a thou (*tu*) — that he is only insofar as the one I (*ego, aham*) says to him 'thou' — never in the nominative, which is not even possible but in the vocative, to give him his very being, which is a being *called* (to existence.)"²⁹ There is also a dynamism of the Spirit creating and moving towards this cosmotheandric awareness³⁰.

4. Fashioning the Symbols of Expression

It is in the course of expressing this core experience that Dr. Panikkar elaborates his categories:

When a quarter century ago, I began to write the ideas expressed in this book (*The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*) I had already lived them in various ways...When however, I began to formulate these intuitions — was compelled to do so — my experience had to be poured into 'old skins', simply because there was nothing else available, either for me or for the public I was addressing. No wonder they burst the old skins and spilled the new wine. Since writing this

25. R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*, (London 1981), 28

26. R. Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Mankind, Icon-Person-Mystery*, (London 1973), 54.

27. *ibid.*, 82.

28. Cf. *ibid.*, 62.

29. *ibid.*, 66–67.

30. See for instance, R. Panikkar, "Colligate Fragmenta? For an Integration of Reality", In F. A. Eigo & S. E. Fittipaldi [eds.], *From Alienation to At-Oneness: Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova*. 70.

book, I have been engaged in obtaining a new 'must' and procuring new skins...³¹

4.1. *Tempiternity: The Perspective*

Since God, for Panikkar, is a pole of a cosmotheandric reality,³² and the human being is "person" — a knot in the web of reality³³, he views reality from a stance which attempts to integrate both the temporal and the temporally irreducible factors into a non-dualistic perspective. This he terms *tempiternity*. In his own words: "I have created the word *tempiternity* to express that which overcomes the scheme of time here and eternity later. I think that the entire reality is tempiternal i.e. temporal and eternal in one and the same time in a non-dualistic relation."³⁴

4.2. *The Logos: The Thought*

He calls for a redimensioning of the role of logical reason — a dethronement of the *logos*.³⁵ The *logos* is not the whole of human person.³⁶ While it is one thing to assert that thinking tells us what being is, it is quite another thing to assert that being *depends* on thinking. Obviously reality has a dialectical aspect, but this aspect does not exhaust all the real.³⁷ The function of reason is not to discover, but to check, to control, to accept. It offers what can be called the negative criterion of truth. Being is bigger than *logos*. In other words, Reality is non-dualistic.

31. R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*, 25.

32. See for instance R. Panikkar, "La Visione Cosmoteandrica. Il Senso Religioso Emergente del Terzo Millennio", in R. Caporale [ed.], *Vecchi e Nuovi Dei. Studi e Riflessioni sul Senso Religioso Emergente dei Nostri Tempi. Atti del II Simposio Internazionale sulla Credenza organizzato dalla Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli. Vienna 7-11 Gennaio 1975*, [Turin 1976], 535, 540-541.

33. See for instance R. Panikkar, "Sur l'Anthropologie du Prochain", in *L'Homme et Son Prochain. Actes du VIII Congrès des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française. Toulouse 6-9 September 1956*, [Paris 1956], 228-231.

34. R. Panikkar, "Alternative a la Culture Moderne, [Texte II Dialogue]", *interculture* 15 [October-December 1982], 25.

35. See for instance R. Panikkar, "Athens or Jerusalem? Philosophy or Religion?" in *Logos* [University of Santa Clara] [1981], 37.

36. See R. Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism. The Tower of Babel", in *Cross Currents* [Summer 1979], 197-230.

37. See R. Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue", in F. Whaling [ed.], *The World's Religious Traditions*, 205.

4.3. *The Myth: The Frame of Reference*

Raimundo Panikkar alludes to the heresy of subordinationism which has crept into Western Christian reflection. The Spirit has been subordinated to the *Logos*.³⁸ Myth is the realm of the Spirit and is a *sui generis* apprehension of the real which neither contradicts, nor merely supplements but rather implements the work of the *Logos*.³⁹ Myth is the context, the horizon of intelligibility.⁴⁰ It situates every affirmation with respect to a perspective, to a standpoint. Faith belongs to the sphere of the myth⁴¹, to orthopraxis rather than to orthodoxy. Faith is not to be equated to simple knowledge. The intellectual expression of faith, viz. belief (*pistema*), is not to be equated to the object of the mind (*noema*).⁴² Every logos has a myth. Hence, every affirmation is relative (in the sense of being "related", not in the sense of being "relativistic"), and renders impossible any claim to absolutism pure and simple⁴³. Likewise, on the dynamic level, precisely because of the presence of the Spirit, there is a coefficient of provisionality involved in every stance.

4.4. *Symbol: The Category of Relatedness*

Another key category in expressing the intrinsic relatedness of reality is the symbol. Symbol links objectivity and subjectivity; the speaker, the spoken to, the spoken of, the spoken with, mythical and logical awareness. It is the self-manifestation of the symbolized.⁴⁴

5. Christ and the Theology of Religion

Raimundo Panikkar's theology of religion is situated and symbolized in Christ, or as he calls this reality in cross-cultural terms, the cosmotheandric principle.

38. See R. Panikkar, "Athens or Jerusalem? Philosophy or Religion?" *Logos* [University of Santa Clara]. [1981], 37-38.

39. See *ibid.*, 36-37.

40. See R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 4-5.

41. See R. Panikkar, "Faith — A Constitutive Dimension of Man", in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 8 [Spring 1971], 253-254.

42. See R. Panikkar, "Myth in Religious Phenomenology", in *Monchanin*, 8 [June-December 1975], 16-17.

43. See R. Panikkar, "Athens or Jerusalem? Philosophy or Religion?", in *Logos* (University of Santa Clara) [1981], 37-38.

44. See R. Panikkar, "Symbols and Reality. The 'Symbolic' Difference", in *Monchanin* 8 (June-December 1975), 18-22.

One can speak of a Christological universalism. Christ is situated within the transcendence of the Father and the immanence and dynamism of the Spirit. Christ is link, redeemer and glorifier of the universe⁴⁵. Creation itself is only a Christophany, on its journey, under the action of the Spirit to the unity of the whole Christ. As Dr. Panikkar became more aware of the cross-cultural implications, he prefers to speak of the theandric fact, the cosmotheandric principle, rather than Christ. This cosmotheandric fact is effective and acknowledged in the different religions of the world.⁴⁶

Jesus is one of the names of the cosmotheandric principle.⁴⁷ Jesus is the revealer of a Superscripture; and as such, both way and goal.

His views are expressed in a lengthy paragraph which is well worth quoting:

The Way cannot be severed from the Goal. The spatial metaphor here may be misleading if taken superficially. It is not simply that there are different ways leading to the peak, but that the summit itself would collapse if all the paths disappeared. The peak is in a certain sense, the result of the slopes leading to it. Our position distinguishes itself here from the nominalistic one mentioned before. In Christian terms: "Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father". In a certain Hindu parlance the other shore is already here, realization is not 'another thing', there is nowhere to go: reality is. As Buddhism declares: *samsara* is *nirvana* and *nirvana* is *samsara*.

And yet, the goal cannot be identified with any of the ways or means to it. Though Christ is the Mystery in the sense that to see Christ is to reach the Mystery, still the Mystery cannot be totally identified with Christ. Christ is but one aspect of the Mystery as a whole, even though he is the Way when we are on that way. Only when we are not walking on them, i. e. when they are mere lines on a map, are there 'many' paths. For the actual wayfarer, there is only one way.

45. See R. Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Mankind. Icon-Person-Mystery*, (London 1973).

46. See in this regard, R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*, (London 1981).

47. See R. Panikkar, *Salvation in Christ. Concreteness and Universality, the Superscripture* (Santa Barbara 1972), 71ff.

Not only is it unique, it is only a 'way' if it gives access to the summit. For the speculative mind, it is a *pars pro toto*, for it is in it and through it that the Christian reaches the Mystery. At this summit, the Christian realizes that he and his experiences of the Mystery are inseparable, indistinguishable; thus you discover Christ in all those who have reached the Mystery even if these ways have not been the Christian one."⁴⁸

6. Religion

Raimundo Panikkar's understanding of religion is likewise an evolving one. There is a transition from an objective emphasis to a re-evaluation of the personalistic dimension of religion. A religion's self-understanding belongs to what a religion is. From the stress on orthodoxy there is a growing emphasis on the functional aspect of religion as orthopraxis. Religion as such, is eventually conceived as a constitutive dimension of man, a symbol.⁴⁹

Within religion itself, the ineffable Mystery is distinguished from the ecclesial and sociological levels of religion. Though distinct among themselves, the last is a way of access to the second, which in its turn is a way of access to the Mystery⁵⁰. Since religion is personalized as a symbol, and situated in the realm of orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy, in Dr. Panikkar's vision, the two issues of the "salvific value of religions" and that of the salvation of the non-believer" tend to be identified.

7. The Church, Christianity and Religion

There is a shift in perspective in Raimundo Panikkar's understanding of Christianity.

Initially there was an accent on the superiority of Christianity over against other religions. Christianity is the end, the fulfillment of religions.⁵¹ At most, it may encounter fragments of truth

48. R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*, (London 1981), 24-25.

49. See R. Panikkar, "La Religione del Futuro o la Crisi del Concetto di Religione — La Religiosità Umana", *Civiltà delle Macchine* 27 [July-December 1979], 166-171.

50. See R. Panikkar, "Man and Religion: a Dialogue with Panikkar", in *Jeevadhara* [January-February 1981], 5-32.

51. See for instance "Sobre el Sentido Cristiano de la Vida", in *Humanisme y Cruz*, [Madrid 1963], 112-177.

in other religions, which Christianity subsequently integrates into itself.

In a subsequently toned stance, while admitting the presence of Christ in other religions, Christianity always remains a specially qualified fragment called to activate the dynamism toward the unity of religion.⁵² Other religions are a vestibule of Christianity, a Christianity in potency. The other religions cannot be called 'non-Christian' because of the ontic presence of Christ. Hence, a *sui generis* relationship exists between them and Christianity.

In a yet further stage of Dr. Panikkar's reflection a distinction is made between Church and Christianity, the social and historical embodiment of the Christian faith, and as such, one possible expression of the Christian faith.⁵³

The Church is not a religion. Though she has a *sui generis* relationship to Christianity, she also has a relationship to other religions.⁵⁴ In the Church, one can distinguish the visible aspect from the invisible, (the latter would include all those who are saved). The mission of the Church is seen more in terms of metaphors such as leaven, light and salt, which respectively leavens, illumines and gives savour, without being identified with the reality on which they act.

In an ulterior phase of his reflection, Raimundo Panikkar affirms the presence of the ecclesial level in the different religions of the world.⁵⁵ On the sociological level, all religions are equal; on the ecclesial level, they are complementary. The mission of the different religions is seen in terms of mutual fecundation and dialogue. The trait of uniqueness, is not the exclusive prerogative of Christianity, and far from being considered on the objective plane in terms of a comparison with other religions, is seen in more qualitative terms and extended to all religions. Each religion has a coefficient of uniqueness — a statement which can only be made from within faith in that religion.

52. See for instance R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, (London 1964).

53. See R. Panikkar, "Ogni Autentica Religione e Via di Salvezza", in V. J. Fernando (ed.), *Incontro tra le Religioni*, (Verona 1968), 107-124.

54. See R. Panikkar, "La Chiesa e le Religioni del Mondo", in *Humanitas*, (January 1966), 168-173.

55. See R. Panikkar, "Response to Harold Coward", in *Cross Currents*, (Summer 1979), 190-192.

As far as the Church and salvation are concerned, "the Church is so constitutively the place of salvation that, wherever there is salvation, there is the Church; the Church being the locus, the place of salvation by definition".⁵⁶

8. Situating Religious Pluralism

Religious Pluralism therefore becomes a theological imperative. Pluralism does not involve the recognition and intellectual equation of different systems, which would only create a super-system. It means, instead, the acceptance of the non-recognition of the various systems. It involves the existential acceptance of the other as other without being able to understand or co-opt him. It belongs to the sphere of confidence, of myth.⁵⁷ Dialectical tensions become creative polarities.

The methodological parameters which situate Raimundo Panikkar's theology of religions are concisely formulated in his programmatic article: *The Bostonian Verities*.⁵⁸

8.1. Any Christian affirmation should be careful to delimit itself towards past Christian tradition so as to situate itself within the main *corpus* of Christian reflection; so also towards the other traditions of the world so as to stress complementarity, correction or coincidence.⁵⁹

8.2. Any Christian affirmation has to acknowledge that while affirming what it believes, it does not intend to pre-empt or exclude not only other Christian interpretations, but also non-Christian formulations of the same or analogous principles.⁶⁰

The following affirmations of Raimundo Panikkar are expressive of the above principles:

1. The different religious traditions of the world are the normal and ordinary ways of salvation willed by God.⁶¹

56. R. Panikkar, *Salvation in Christ: Concreteness and Universality*; (Santa Barbara 1972), 14.

57. See R. Panikkar, "Prolegomena to the Problem of the Universality of the Church", in J. B. Chethimattam (ed.), *Unique and Universal. Fundamental Problems of an Indian Theology*, (Bangalore 1972), 155-163.

58. See R. Panikkar, "The Bostonian Verities: A Comment on the Boston Affirmations", in *The Andover Newton Quarterly* 18 (January 1978), 145-153.

59. *Ibid.*, 152.

60. *Ibid.*

61. See R. Panikkar, *Salvation in Christ: Concreteness and Universality*, (Santa Barbara 1972). 65-66.

2. The Saviour is unique, however, his uniqueness belongs primarily to the qualitative and not to the quantitative order.⁶²

3. The ecclesial dimension is present universally in the religions of the world.⁶³

4. Religions are not only complementary; they are rather supplementary. They support and enforce one another. They are interpenetrated and interpenetrating.⁶⁴

Raimundo Panikkar considers it a major theological endeavour to articulate an adequate theology of religion. In his view, it could be "a christo-centric theology, even if the Greek name of Christ is not mentioned; for He does not stand only for one single event but for the cosmotheandric principle, which being incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth, has not only spoken many times through the prophets, but also has not left himself without witness in any moment of history"⁶⁵.

In Conclusion

The theological vision of Raimundo Panikkar on religions, both poses serious problems and hints at intriguing possibilities.

Some of the nodal (and highly controverted) issues hinge on the *understanding of the relationship* between:

- Jesus and Christ;
- the Church and Christianity;
- the Church and Religions;
- Religions among themselves.

Dr. Panikkar's stock response to all these queries, both situated and expressed in its multidimensional implications, is that such relationships are to be envisaged as *non-dualistic* (i. e. neither monistic nor dualistic).⁶⁶

To all purposes, this apparently forthright answer seems to confront us with a new paradigm, which involves a new system of categories and discourse. Involved here are issues of pre-comprehension, perspective, method and hermeneutics and not

62. See *ibid.*, 66–67.

63. See above.

64. See R. Panikkar, *Salvation in Christ: Concreteness and Universality*. [Santa Barbara 1972], 81.

65. *Ibid.*, 72.

66. Many of the key categories which underpin Dr. Panikkar's vision have either a non-dualistic connotation or non-dualistic nuances, e. g. Radical Relativity, Tempiternity, Myth and Logos, Symbol, Ontonomy, Dialogical Dialogue, Cosmotheandricism, etc.

merely specific matters of theological interpretation and application within a common paradigm. The issues mooted seem to touch on the very parameters of theological reflection.

New paradigms are as yet untested and cannot be automatically endorsed, nor on the other hand, rejected, unless *obviously* alien to the community experience and its fundamental articulation. This implies patience before judgement. The judgement then in its turn, will be based on the inner coherence and adequacy of the new paradigm to reflect in its own categories, the experience which the old paradigm had striven to understand and articulate.

This testing, acknowledgment, refinement and authentication, atleast as far as the Catholic community's self-understanding is concerned, has to be an ecclesial task, insofar as the elaboration in question claims to be symbolic of the community's experience.

Consequently what is called for, is an encounter *with*, a confrontation-evaluation *within* understanding. This is but another name for dialogue, which is being increasingly seen, not merely as an ecumenical imperative, but as a dimension integral to the philosophico-theological enterprise as such, and a *kairos* of our age. The term "dialogue" implies a sort of negotiation, a word, which in its current significance seems to belong to the world of diplomacy and trade, and not with the things of the Spirit. Yet in its Latin derivation, it can be very close to a theology with the will to love: *negare otium*: saying No! to sloth, to torpor, to repose⁶⁷.

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67. See K. Cragg, *The Christ and the Faiths, Theology in Cross-Reference*, [London 1986], 23.

Christ and Human Fellowship in Secular Culture - according to M.M. Thomas

C.P. Mathew

Rev. C.P. Mathew examines certain selected writings of M.M. Thomas in order to describe the central concern of Thomas to bring Christian faith in a permanent dialectics with the factors of the evolving secular culture. Thomas envisages an integral human fellowship in a secular society, and understands Christ as the spiritual ferment of this cultural process. In this sense the Spirit of Christ transforms patterns of secular culture into the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached. Church with its practice of the Eucharistic table-fellowship is a powerful sign and instrument of this universal koinonia. Thomas's Christology is a critique on the prevailing notion of a denominational and communal Church. C.P. Mathew is pursuing doctoral studies at Bangalore.

In any discussion of a Christology in search of common humanity in India, Christians are called upon to define the gospel, taking into account the plurality of religions and secular ideologies. According to Thomas in order to move along this line, 'faith in Christ' should transcend Christian religion and traditional Christological creeds, thereby making Christology practical and ethical in character and at the same time bringing it in apostolic continuity.

In the context of a pluralistic theology of religions and ideologies that seeks humanism, Thomas upholds the ultimacy of Christology in which there is a place for dialogue allowing one's faith to be put along side other faiths and common human values. This opens way to an examination of one's faith in the categories of others. In such a dialogue, Thomas believes that a principle of common humanity is bound to emerge, a principle of new Creation, of which Christ is the centre. This is a paradigm shift away from the traditional Christology rooted in the credal formulas and the absolutism of ontological academic rationalisation. To Thomas,

Christologies change as the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is interpreted in the new religious and ideological milieu of modern India. And we

must look forward to the emergence of new Christologies through theological enquiry in the Indian setting and history, both in the church and outside. Indeed Indian Christologies are coming into being through dialogue on Christ's person and way between Christianity, other religions and secular ideologies.¹

Here we find a revision of the individualistic-dogmatic theology of Christian religion, allowing Christ to be seen in different cultural contexts. This method is applied by Thomas in the historical and religio-ideological context of modern India. What India needs is a new Christology that transcends all kinds of traditional denominational creeds and confessions of the Church so that a new human community is possible. It is towards such a practical-ethical Christology in India that Thomas looks forward.

1. Critique of the Dogmatic Christology of the Church

Thomas's christological thinking is never in the form of a dogma or doctrine of Christ, unrelated to the historic context. All his discussions on Christology dealt with the creation of a new human community in Christ.

In traditional Catholic theology it has been customary to start with the dogmatic formulation of the Councils² of the Church, which affirms that Christ is a divine person with two natures - a human nature and a divine nature. It is certainly a fundamental affirmation that should be taken into account by any Christian theology; but it hardly seems suitable or adequate as a point of departure. This means Thomas does not agree with those who identify the divinely revealed truths of the Bible with the traditional dogmatics of the church which supports the hierarchical-infallible authority of the church.

In this connection what Thomas suggests is the need to hold "the Core content of the original message" of the Gospel without absolutizing the language and symbols in which they are expressed.³

Thomas evaluates the place of dogma in the life of the Church by saying that creeds and the historical confessions and the teaching authority of the Church are safeguards against heresy in the contin-

1. M.M. Thomas. "A Christ-centred Humanist Approach to other Religions in the Indian Pluralistic Context", Garvin D Costs (Ed.) *Christian uniqueness Reconsidered - The Myth of a pluralistic Theology of Religion*, New York : Orbis Books, 1990, P. 59-60.

2. The Chalcedonian formula presupposes a Christology of "descent." It starts off with God and then goes on to affirm how the eternal Son became man.

3. M.M. Thomas, Op. Cit. P. 48.

uous reformulation of the christian faith. But it sometimes amounts to absolutisation of the tradition and assumes that the church already knows the full "substance" of the Gospel, and that no new theological truth can emerge in the encounter of the Gospel with new cultures and situations. Since new situations call for the appropriation of new aspects of the truth and meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Thomas envisages, "It may be debated whether or not there is here also an implicit acknowledgment of the crucified Jesus as the mediator of the newness in any sense. In any case the Church's Christology affirming the centrality of Jesus as the bearer of new humanity..... should incorporate into itself new insights in Church's Christology."⁴

Though faith in Christ does arise logically and chronologically with his resurrection, the starting point for comprehending it is his cross and that brings back to the historical Jesus. The historical Jesus is the hermeneutical principle that enables us to draw closer to the totality of Christ both in terms of knowledge and in terms of real-life praxis. Thomas' Christology tells us that it is on the basis of Christ that we know who God is and what it means to be a human being. It is on the basis of this faith-conviction that he develops Christological insights for a common humanity in India.

2. Christological insights for a common humanity in India

a) *Christ as the Spiritual ferment of Modern India.*

It is Thomas's contention that in the context of the new spiritual ferment created by the dynamics of modern secular history and the encounter of religions, the ferment of Jesus Christ was an important factor.

Thomas affirms that Christ is present and active in the world of today, engaged in a continuous dialogue with men, other nations, affirming his kingly rule over them through the power of His law and His love.⁵

Thomas says that Jesus Christ is at work in the revolutions as vicar over evil powers through His cross and Resurrection and His kingdom and His New Humanity. The promise.. of Christ for a richer human life will be fulfilled only if the revolution receives within it Christ's Gospel of redemption and the New creation of which the Church is witness.⁶

4. M.M. Thomas, "Christology and Pluralistic Consciousness" in *NCCR.*, 1986, PP. 10-11-

5. M.M. Thomas, *Towards a Theology of Contemporary Ecumenism*, Madras: CLS, 1978, P.77

6. *Ibid.* pp. 68-69.

Thomas believes that Gospel has great relevance to the new religious awakening of modern India in terms of the idea of purposive history and historical mission. And it is only in so far as Christians are able to enter into real partnership with people of other faiths on the basis of their common humanity in a new affirmation of history and its implication for persons, state and society that a fruitful dialogical existence is possible. Christ as the spiritual ferment enables Christians for such a meaningful interaction with the objective of seeking a common humanity in modern India.

The emphasis here is more on the ethical aspect of Christology, since he acknowledges the ethical teachings of Jesus as an influential spiritual ferment in the renascent stream of modern India.

The agape love taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and manifested in the life and death of Jesus was a central influence in the renaissance of Hinduism. The interpretations of Jesus' person and life as the revelation of God's being in relation to the world or of God's identification with suffering humanity and as the pattern of true humanity had been a dominant spiritual ferment in the nineteenth and twentieth century movements of Hindu reform and renaissance.⁷

The spiritual ferment behind the contemporary awakening of the peoples of Asia stimulated by the person of Christ provides a starting-point for the process of building indigenous cultural foundations in modern India. This new spiritual awakening tends to produce individuals and groups conscious of their separate individual selfhood and its rights. The dynamism of an emerging dignified personhood aiming a common humanity in personal and inter-personal relationships within the Church and Church's relations with people of other faiths is the characteristic feature of the forward-looking cultural ferment in modern India.

b) Vision of Christ-centred secular fellowship

It is within the framework of the "Church and the Human Community" that Thomas speaks of the possibility of a Christ-centred secular fellowship. To him, an area where the sign of a wider new humanity must be looked for is the struggles of communities and groups within the Church for a secular human fellowship. Thomas maintains:

It is only in the tension between the fellowship of the

7. M.M. Thomas. "A Christ-centred Humanist Approach" P. 58

Church and its task of creating fellowship in the larger society that the former can remain a Christ-centred fellowship without turning into a self-centred closed communal group.⁸

In India at the time when missionaries of the West were with the outcastes and the poor, both of them saw christian faith as the source of a new humanising influence and the foundation of a new community. Thomas says:

Where conversion was genuine, whether of individuals or of groups, the converts saw salvation of Christ not only in terms of individual salvation or heaven after death, but also as the spiritual source of a new community on earth in which their human dignity and status were recognised.⁹

It was the promise of humanisation inherent in the gospel of salvation that led to the influx of the oppressed into the church. Besides it is the personal appeal of the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ seen as the foundation of the larger secular humanhood that made the privileged classes decide for Christ as the bearer of ultimate human destiny. Recognising the role of the Church in this process, Thomas argues that the church cannot be the sign of the New Humanity unless it is concerned with active participation in the struggle for secular fellowship on a Christ-centred basis.¹⁰

Therefore religious fellowship within the Church and the human fellowship in secular society are both within the reality of Christ and the history of salvation in the world.

Another area where Christ-centred fellowship is possible is the building up of a wider new humanity. Thomas states that there are people who consider that conversion to Christ does not necessarily imply conversion to the christian community isolated from the communities in which they live. But rather it implies the building up of a Christ-centred fellowship of faith within the society, culture and religion in which they live. They can transform their structures and values from within. Thomas gives K.C. Sen's 'Church of the New Dispensation'¹¹ in the 19th century as clear example of this approach.

8. *Salvation and Humanisation* P. 13.

9. *Ibid.*, P. 14

10. *Some Theological Dialogues*, P. 114.

11. In the New Dispensation, formed in 1870, Keshub Chandra Sen could manage to synthesize Hindu and Christian elements in formulating the doctrines of gospel ethics as universally applicable.

Thomas does not reject the possibility of people living as members of the Hindu community and at the same time being committed to Christ. These people are opposed to baptism because it has become a sign not primarily of incorporation into Christ's body but of proselytism into a religious community. In this situation, how does the Church open itself and become a sign of the new humanity in Christ? Thomas answers this question as follows:

It can be done by the Church extending the hand of fellowship across the 'communal' barrier and recognising a form of the Church in the Christ-centred fellowship of faith emerging outside the Church.¹²

Thomas acknowledges the importance of eucharistic fellowship of the church in relation to the struggles of the church for secular humanhood. It gives new meaning to the liberative and social aspect of the celebrations of the eucharist. Since Thomas believes that all religions and secular ideologies have this liberative motifs of struggling for the humanisation of this world, he opts for a Christ-centred secular fellowship to be practiced along with eucharistic communion.

C) Christ as the dynamic of revolutionary humanism

Thomas's understanding of Christ as the "dynamic of revolutionary humanism" has much influence on his concepts about the church and her mission, especially in the context of the struggle for human dignity and social justice. The Christological significance of Christ's identification with the oppressed humanity is present in the mind of Thomas from the very beginning of his theological thinking. This means that one should not exclude from Indian understanding the ideas of those who are primarily concerned with the conceptual tools not of 'religious' India but of the India of secular humanism. Of course the concepts of Jesus as Victor and Liberator and as *Adipurusha* of a new Humanity and New Creation in their corporate aspect are linked to it. Along with Chenchiah, Chakkarai and Devanandan who have given powerful expression to it, Thomas also brings to our attention the words of S.K. Rudra and C.F. Andrews who thought of Christ as the Dynamic for Revolutionary Humanism.

Classical expression of Christ as the centre of humanity and dynamic of service to mankind is found in S.K. Rudra and C.F. Andrews. Rudra says: 'The one dynamic that human society needs therefore for its uplifting and unification is Christ the incarnate God. Without a centre,

12. *Some Theological Dialogues*, p. 115.

humanity can never become one. We can conceive of no other ultimate centre but Christ the Incarnate God'. To meet the challenge of awakened India, C.F. Andrews says: 'Christ the Eternal Word, Life and Light of millions who have not yet consciously known Him; Christ the son of man suffering in each indignity offered to the least of His brethren; Christ the Giver of more abundant life to noble and aspiring souls; Christ the Divine Head of Humanity, in whom all the races of mankind are gathered into one - these are the great truths which we must express in act as well as creed.'¹³

According to Thomas, the understanding of the Cross of God's identification with the suffering humanity calls for an Indian Christology which will present Jesus Christ as the dynamic of revolutionary humanism in political and ideological struggle.

Thomas considers the gospel of Christ as a new way of sacrificial love established by the way of the Cross. Therefore he says: "To the Christian the Gospel comes not simply as a new way of looking at the world (through the eyes of faith) but also as a new life... This way into the world struggle is different from the motives, hopes and fears of the revolutionaries of the world."¹⁴

According to Thomas, Jesus' death on the Cross destroys the wall which divides the human community and thus creates a new universal human family; and through the Cross He disarmed the principalities and powers and triumphed over them (Co. 2:15).¹⁵

Thomas points out that the crucified Christ, the bearer of New Humanity is the dynamic who is at work over all creation to humanise our lives. He says: "In secular society the witness to the New Humanity in Christ and its redemptive power for politics, society and person take a different mode, namely the instrumentality of believers gathered in voluntary congregation and cater to secular groups in civil society. Even so, it remains a witness to the Lordship of Christ over all creation and all human life".¹⁶

This is the dynamism Thomas has found in Christ for revolutionary humanism.

13. M.M. Thomas, "Towards An Indian Understanding of Jesus Christ". in Mathai Zacharia (ed) *Indian Church - Identity and Fulfilment*, Madras: CLS, 1971 PP. 26-27.

14. *The christian in the World struggle*, pp. 40-41

15. M.M. Thomas, *Kroosikkapetta Yesu Loka Karthavu* (Crucified Jesus: Lord of the world) Tiruvalla: CLS. 1982. P.16

16. *Man and the Universe of faiths*. P. 143.

Relating this to the life and work of the Church in India, Thomas believes that christians certainly have a positive task of discerning Christ in humanist ideologies and movements. And only if christians are prepared to enter into that task of redefining the dynamic of Christ's work in movements of religious and secular humanism can the relevance of the gospel be made clear to modern man.

3. Dimensions of Christ-centred human community in India

In considering the nature of a new humanity in Christ, Thomas says that in the New Testament, *koinonia* or fellowship does not automatically refer to the Church, but shares the features of the Kingdom more than those of the Church. Therefore we should make a distinction between the church and fellowship, and speak of the church as witness to the fellowship in Christ rather than as the fellowship itself.

According to Thomas, the Church in India, like the Church everywhere, is called upon to make its witness to fellowship in Christ in the contemporary setting of India's search for the spirit and new forms of community. He considers the church's witness to fellowship at three levels or forms.

1) Fellowship in Christ realised as a sacramental reality in the religious life of the Church around the Bible and the Lord's Table.

2) Fellowship in Christ realised as a social reality in the community life of the members of the Church and as a prophetic ministry of the church in the larger society.

3) Fellowship in Christ as a concept providing the criterion and framework of a Christian-non-christian partnership in the struggle for humanisation of community life in traditional village and modern urban societies.¹⁷

These different levels of *koinonia* have in common mankind's search for humanity and community. Their difference is a difference in acknowledgment of the new humanity offered in Christ which Thomas expressed in terms of the acknowledgment of the person of Christ, the pattern of the suffering servanthood, and the agape of the Cross.

Thomas describes the first level of *koinonia* as "the *Koinonia* of the eucharistic community of the church". The other two levels of *koinonia*, are integrally related to the church as structured nucleus. What Thomas calls the Christ-centred religious and secular fellowship outside the empirical church are of particular interest here.

17. *New Creation in Christ* P. 43.

a) Koinonia of the Eucharistic Community

Thomas indicates the first level of fellowship as fellowship in Christ realised as a sacramental reality in the religious life of the church around the Bible and the Lord's Table. These are days of religionless christianity, so Thomas wanted to put an added emphasis on this aspect of the Church's witness. Eucharist declares and acknowledges the source of the fellowship in the act of God, in the self-offering of Jesus Christ on the Cross and the fellowship of sharing in the Holy Spirit.

Thomas brings out the struggles of the Church in India to build up a religious fellowship in common worship and at the Lord's Table against the rigidities created by caste and untouchability.

The reality of the religious fellowship in Christ transcending caste has been the good news of Christ not only to large numbers of outcaste and lowcaste, and tribal groups, but also to many of the educated among the upper castes and classes. They saw in the sacramental fellowship of the Church a new reality, a new humanity emerging.... In fact the movements of church unity in South India and North India have been considered significant because it would make possible "all believers in one place" to belong to one Household of Faith. This witness, even though only in the narrowing sphere of religious symbolism, is of tremendous significance, for here we are celebrating the self-offering of Jesus Christ in whom all mankind is offered to God and recreated as one new humanity in Himself.¹⁸

Thomas by quoting St. Paul speaks of the Eucharistic fellowship experienced by the early church as the symbol of new humanity in Christ.

In Colossians and Galatians, St. Paul speaks of the divisions transcended in the new humanity of Christ. (Col. 3:11). In Galatians, he adds: "There is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). St. Paul admonished the rich in the Corinthian Church for denying the reality of the fellowship of the Lord's Table by their not sharing their pre-eucharist. 'For in eating each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk' which amounts to their despising the Church of God and

18. *New Creation in Christ*. P. 45.

humiliating those who have nothing (I Cor. 11:20-22) ¹⁹

Coming to the modern missionary movement in India, it was the *Koinonia* of the Church transcending caste that made the Gospel good news of human dignity to the outcaste. It was the spirituality of the Lord's Table that made the first dent into the religious spirituality that sanctioned caste. And in the christian schools and colleges, christian fellowship was built as a secular human fellowship into which the teachers and students of other faiths could enter and experience a new humanism.

The two life-experiences of the communities mentioned above clearly shows that the fellowship of the eucharistic meal and its style of sharing in Christ is the most powerful symbol of *koinonia* and unity of the church local and universal. It is also a symbol of church's witness to the struggles for a just and participant society which will be a reflection of *koinonia* in the modern secular world.

Thomas says:

I believe that the Christian contribution to a "secular" concept of humanity as essentially a Community of persons can be best made if we maintain the message of the gosepl that God became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ to overcome the alienation of humanity from God and to create a '*Koinonia* in Christ' around the Eucharist, a Community of divine forgiveness and mutual forgiveness acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, transcending all religious, cultural and ideological divisions with a mission to build a wider '*secular Koinonia*' of mutual forgiveness and justice among the peoples of the world, as witness to the ultimate goal of creation, namely the Kingdom of God. ²⁰

This is clearly true in the history of the Christian missions and churches in our country. And when the idea of religious fellowship in Christ, of the Christian congregation, led to the idea of a secular fellowship in the total life of the community, humanisation was already at work. It soon had its impact on the larger Indian society.

b) Koinonia of dialogue with people of other faiths

According to Thomas, Church's witness to Christ consists in

19. M.M. Thomas, "The Future of the Church in India", in *NCCR*, Vol. C. No. 3, March, 1990. P. 144.

20. *Church's Mission and Post Modern Humanism*. p. 63.

entering into partnership with men of other religions and secular faiths in the struggle for a secular *koinonia*, learning from them at some points, and correcting them at others, and at the same time pointing to Jesus Christ as the source, criterion and goal of the new humanity they seek. Here Thomas thinks along the line of Paul Devanandan who was never tired of insisting that the renaissance taking place in Hinduism today is in large measure an attempt to assimilate the ethical values of *koinonia* into the Hindu ethic and to restate the classical Hindu theology to suit it. Thomas quotes Devanandan as follows:

If we believe that all new creation is in Christ the dynamic rejuvenation of Hinduism now in process is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the impact of the eternal life of the living Christ reforming Hinduism from within setting us free and enlightening our minds to true values²¹

Thomas also believes that the Hindu idea of *ahimsa* propagated by Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave is being transformed by the idea of *agape* in the sermon on the mount and produces a new humanism and the ideal of a casteless, classless society with a new non-violent technique of struggle for social transformation. Thus protestant Hinduism takes a dynamic lead in the search for new structures of community. From another side secular humanism of liberal or Marxian inspiration also is a search for a responsible society embodying new ideas of personal freedom and social fellowship making political and economic power responsible. Therefore Thomas says:

The *Koinonia* of the Christian Church is not to become a religious community among religious communities as understood communally in India, but that it should be a fellowship, which does not seek rights and interests of its own except the right to be and to serve, by being an evangelistic and social ferment in all communities in the name of Christ. ²²

The distinction pointed out above between community and communalism by Thomas was the guiding force of K.T. Paul, Bishop Azariah and others to declare that Indian Christian acquiescence in the communal electorate for Christians imposed by Britain would turn to be a betrayal of the Indian Church's missionary character and would turn it into a static minority communal group. Thomas notes that it was

21. *New Creation in Christ*. P. 47.

22. M.M. Thomas, "The Future of the Church in India." *NCCR*, March 1990 P. 146.

this theological insight that led Indian Christian Association leaders like Mukherji and De Souza to give up the demand for communal representation during the deliberations of the constituent Assembly of Independent India which was greeted by Nehru, Patel and others as historical. The result of that was an immediate response in the Constituent Assembly to include among the Fundamental Rights of the citizen the right to propagate religion, as christians were demanding. Thus it has been a sort of covenant between christians and the nation that christians will not go communal in politics and the nation state will protect the right of religious propaganda as a fundamental human right.²³

In this connection, the relation of the self-identity of Christians as a community of faith in Christ to their traditional ethnic, caste and other communal cultural self-identities on the one hand and to the emerging national Indian self-identity on the other, needs thinking in a realistic but Christ-centred manner. To Thomas there are two issues involved here.

One, how to redefine the traditional communal self-identities of Christians in the light of the movement of unity of the Church in India, Second, how to redefine the self-identity of the Christian community in the context of the Indian nation for a secular national self-identity transcending all religious communalisms.²⁴

In the light of the above statement, it may be observed here that further advance in church unity in India requires not mere conversations on faith and order and doctrinal models of union but also, perhaps, primarily exploration on the theology of the relation between cultural self-identity and Christian self-identity in the Church, i.e, models of inter-cultural reconciliation.

According to Thomas, in the wider negotiations of the church, creedal expressions often found in the writings of Poet Tagore, Ram Manohar Lohia, and others²⁵ which have been very widespread outside the christian circles must have a place. In this faith-response

23. *Ibid.*

24. M.M. Thomas "The Future of the Church in India," P. 145.

25. Poet Tagore said that the Cross of Jesus is a new element of true spirituality of suffering for the sake of love, a love that cares for the untouchables, the outcastes, the hungry and the naked (Ref. R.W. Taylor, *Jesus in Indian paintings*, Madras, CLS, 1975 PP. 59-62), Ram Manohar Lohia interpreted Cross as a symbol of unity in love for all tortured humanity (Ref. Quoted by M.M. Thomas in "Faith and Ideology in the Struggle for Justice, Bombay: BUILD, 1984. P. 6)

found outside the eucharistic community, which acknowledges Christ's pattern of suffering servant as the ultimate form of human spirituality, Thomas perceives the source and nature of a larger fellowship in Christ.

Thomas finds in this implicit faith-acknowledgement of the non-christian world, a larger secular fellowship in Christ outside the organized church, reflecting however fragmentarily, a wider koinonia in Christ. Because he thinks that there is a general recognition among Indians of a spirituality of passionate love for the "least, the lost and the last", based on the New Humanity of Christ.²⁶

c) Koinonia in christ and the community of people's struggle for New Humanity

Thomas in his description of the forms of Koinonia, comes to the third form which is 'Koinonia-in-Christ and the community of people's struggle for new Humanity'. Thomas finds in modern secular humanism, human struggles for basic human rights of freedom and justice, a recognition of the New Humanity revealed in Christ. To Thomas fellowship as religious reality has to move into fellowship as social reality in the church. The alienation of many of the Christians of low and outcaste background in Kerala from the other Christians, which gives communism so much strength in the state, is due to the inability of the religious fellowship to become the framework of social intercourse and social integration. So Thomas thinks that the fellowship in Christ as social reality must inevitably come into conflict with the constitution of traditional society which has inequality, social exclusiveness and discrimination written into it. It has to come into conflict also with structures of individualism and indifference to persons, inherent in an industrialised atomised or mass society. India's religious tradition has never properly known a prophetic ministry. In fact in its medical, educational and social services, the Indian Church has set up a new tension between a fellowship-oriented Church and a society organised in closed communal *SOLIDARITIES*. On this lies the prophetic being of the Church, and the spiritual foundation of a challenge to existing structures of traditional and modern societies which deny fellowship as a social reality.

This opening up to the fellowship as a social reality of love and mutual forgiveness can particularly take place in search of a spirituality sustaining the almost hopeless struggles for justice. It also occurs

26. *Ibid* p.8.

where self-righteous totalitarian ideologies crucify humanity. Then within the realm of law and ideology the search for love and forgiveness can emerge.

Thomas argues that the Church as a sacrament and sign of the new humanity should be precisely there where this new sense of love and acknowledgement emerge.

The Church cannot be the sign of the New Humanity unless it is present at this point, discerning the reality of the new humanity which is there..... This is possible only if the Church itself is concerned with active participation in the struggle for secular fellowship on a Christ-centred basis.²⁷

Christ is present at the point where religious and secular fellowships or *koinonia* discover the need of love and forgiveness. A challengingly relevant articulation of the new humanity in Christ takes place precisely at the meeting points between church and the religious and secular fellowships. Thomas urges the church to reconsider its form and become a powerful force of change and renewal in India's communalistic society.

According to Thomas, this new humanity in Christ is demonstrated in the Lord's Supper. He continues to say that the centre of unity found in the eucharist can be meaningfully experienced and shared precisely amid the struggles, conflicts and passions of the world. Thomas writes:

Holiness or genuine christian spirituality of salvation is the committed participation in the sacramental dimension of the struggle for human community, and cannot be isolated from that struggle.²⁸

Within the framework of the common humanity in Jesus Christ. Thomas finds an openness to the spirit of the suffering servant and sense of historical purpose present within modern religions and secular ideologies. In Thomas' opinion the person of Jesus has a cosmic function in sharpening and in summing up in himself the suffering servant streams of all religious and cultural traditions. He writes:

Wherever love identifies itself with the struggle of oppressed humanity for liberation into a community of justice and love, and does not let the means betray the

27. Some Theological Dialogues, p. 144.

28. M.M. Thomas, *Towards a Theology of Contemporary Ecumenism*, P. 242.

end, there is acknowledgment of the ultimacy of the way of the Cross for the life of the world transcending all religious and ideological distinctions.²⁹

This means it is difficult to see how the boundary of the Church of Christ is to be defined in relation to common humanity in Christ, and Thomas reiterates his view that "probably there is no defined boundary."³⁰ The new creation, the Kingdom cuts across the Church and the world. He describes the nature of the relation between this secular fellowship in Christ and the eucharistic community as follows:

In this process, the church will learn from others at some points, correct them at others, and at the same time, will spontaneously point to the Divine forgiveness offered to all men in Jesus Christ as the source, criterion and goal of the humanization of society and the universal community which we all seek.³¹

Thomas believes that in the midst of the struggle towards new human community for justice and freedom, the spiritual ferment of Christ as the New Human offers a spiritual healing for human brokenness inflicted by structural violence. The 'Koinonia-in-Christ informed by the New Humanity of Christ' can be experienced better through this struggle for justice and freedom.

The practicality of Thomas' Christology lies in the fact that he relates the idea of 'Koinonia-in-Christ' to a wider human community who in lay vocations can stand creatively in the tension between Agape-Love and struggle for justice on the way to attain religio-secular humanism in India. This Koinonia-in-Christ is to be nurtured by a Church which is open and centred on a wider eucharistic fellowship which surpasses all limitations of communalism and ecclesiocentrism. A Christology which evolves out of this ongoing fellowship will have the ability to create a common humanity in India.

Chekkulathu
Mariathuruthu P.O.
Kottayam 686027

29. M.M. Thomas, "Christology and Pluralistic Consciousness" *NCCR* 1986, pp. 9 - 10;

30. Jacob Thomas, *Ethics of a world community* p. 177,

31. *Ibid* p. 178

Sebastian Kappen's Vision of a Contextual Christology

Jacob Parappally

The basic conviction of Sebastian Kappen, according to the author of this article, is that Jesus and the commitment to his message can bring about a total liberation in the Indian context, provided we are ready to discover the historical Jesus freed from the trappings of cult, dogma, institutionalism and cosmic and gnostic religiousities and take up the challenge of moving from the security of orthodoxy to orthopraxis. Rev. Dr. Jacob Parappally MSFS is Professor of Theology in Jnana - Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune.

Sebastian Kappen has made significant contributions to Indian theology with his well articulated plea for integral human liberation in the Indian context. His contacts with the university students and social activists, and his keen perception of Indian social reality with its oppressive and dehumanizing structures have influenced his theological reflections. In the context of the suffering of the Indian masses due to various forms of oppression - especially religious, social, cultural, economic and political - Kappen believes that the challenge of their integral liberation is the concern of all citizens of India.¹ In this common concern for the liberation of the masses, the responsibility of Christians is great, as they claim to be the co-workers of Christ in the liberation of humans. In India, where religious traditions play an important role in the lives of individuals, what contribution can a religious tradition make for the liberation of the Indian masses? Kappen admits that many historical forms of religion in the past have played and continue to play a reactionary role in legitimizing the systems of unfreedom. But it is his basic conviction that 'authentic religiosity can be a potential for liberation'². The Christian vocation is to seek in the Christian religious tradition the source of their commitment to liberation. Therefore, the purpose of any theological reflection is to enhance this Christian vocation to integral liberation. In this article an attempt is made to highlight the main insights of Sebastian Kappen towards developing a relevant theology in the Indian context.

1. S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, New York, 1977, P. 50.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 17

1. Pre-requisites for Theological Reflection

Any theological reflection, according to Kappen, must begin with an encounter with God through a dynamic relationship with one's life-situation. Kappen says, "The encounter in question must be *primordial*. I qualify as primordial that encounter with God which is realized in the real, not of cult, or of scriptures or religious institutions, but of life, personal and social. In other words, what is envisaged is an encounter in the domain of praxis understood as man's dynamic relationship to his environment in transforming which he transforms himself."³ An encounter with God in one's own context would reveal the presence and the absence of God. Where life is affirmed, one can recognize his presence and where life is negated through all forms of oppression, his absence. It is, therefore, imperative to search for the presence of the Divine in history. This is done by analysing *the layers of conditioning and dimensions of meaning inherent in our God-encounter*.⁴ The layers of conditioning, according to Kappen, are 'class, culture and institutionalized religion'. The analysis must also reveal the various dimensions of meaning implied in God-encounter, especially, the existential, the ethical, the cosmic, the social and the historical. A critical evaluation of what the analysis has revealed would show the factors that are positive to our God-encounter and what are negative. By eliminating the negative conditioning and articulating the inter-relatedness of the various dimensions of meaning, "we come to an understanding of dynamic structure of that primordial experience of being-taken-hold-of-by-God."⁵ It is also important that a theologian does not remain neutral to what he is trying to understand. Any authentic theological reflection must be committed reflection, i.e., "a reflection carried out in the spirit of self-surrender to God whom he met. In other words, it is in the spirit of faith that he should analyse, criticize and articulate".⁶ The disciples of Jesus should, further, reflect on the way of encountering this God in the person of Jesus Christ who is part of our history.

2. The Presence of the Divine in History

Kappen holds the view that we cannot begin our theological reflection with any a priori concept of God. It must begin with the real encounter of the Divine as the absolute Other in the inmost within of

3. S. Kappen, "A New Approach to Theological Education", in *Theologizing in India*, M. Amaladoss, T.K. John, G. Gispert-Sauch (eds.), Bangalore: TPI, 1981, pp. 57-58

4. *Ibid.*, p. 59. 5. *Ibid.*, p. 61. 6. *Ibid.*, p. 60

the subject who encounters God, be it an individual or community.⁷ Even the term God, according to Kappen, is a loaded word implying a personal supreme being which is the product of an earlier theology.⁸ Therefore, Kappen prefers to use the term Divine, as it can better express the reality which is neither personal or impersonal but transpersonal.⁹ This Divine is encountered both as a gift and a challenge. Kappen says that he prefers the term encounter to experience because the term experience can be misunderstood as though God were a mere projection of the mind. He says, "Encounter on the other hand, involves a coming face to face with an 'other', in this case, with the ultimate 'Other', the ground and goal of human beings and history."¹⁰

The Divine is a gift we receive when we experience the transcendence, as in the experience of beauty, love, friendship and community. These experiences may be space and time-bound but they "open a window into that which is beyond the beyond."¹¹

The experience of the presence of the Divine is also an experience of an absence of the Divine as no finite experience can capture the fullness of the Divine. So in a way it is the absent Divine or God who calls us to transcend all the alienations. Thus, in the encounter of the Divine, we experience both our glory and our nakedness. In the privileged moments of this encounter, we are invaded by the absolute Other and we experience wholeness. But we encounter the Divine in our nakedness, frailty, sin, guilt and being-unto-death, exploitation and so on. Kappen says:

Here the divine is perceived not so much as a presence but as an absence that beckons us from the beyond, as an unconditional challenge addressed to us to break loose from all shackles and march forward to the horizon of human divine fullness. Where we meet the divine in our glory, our response naturally takes the form of reverence and thankfulness; where we encounter Him in our alienation it is, it should be, one of striving for fuller being, knowing and loving.¹²

7. See S. Kappen, *Liberation Theology and Marxism*, p. 20

8. See *Ibid.* p. 42; S. Kappen, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation", in: *Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation*, (ed.), P. Puthanangady, Bangalore, 1986, pp. 308-309.

9. See S. Kappen, "Mercy, not Sacrifice". in: *Jesus Today*, S. Kappen (ed.) Madras, 1985, pp. 122-129

10. S. Kappen, *Liberation Theology and Marxism*, p. 20.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

12. S. Kappen, *Jesus Today*, p. 122.

These two religious experiences are not mutually exclusive. Thus the encounter of the Divine is both a gift and a challenge. Kappen says: "The gift requires that we safeguard and preserve it for the future; the challenge must issue in transformative action that recreates ourselves and the world."¹³ The response to this gift-call of the Divine is *theandric practice*.¹⁴ It is not only the discovery of the Divine in contemplation and celebration, but it also creates the truth about the Divine in the historical situations which calls his presence into question. It is a participation in the revelation of the Divine in history. Man is not only a passive receiver of the supernatural Divine revelation, but also is called to be active in discovering the Divine presence in his personal and social history and the history of the world.

History, according to Kappen, must be understood in the context of the understanding of time. One may be able to distinguish three types of time, mythical, cyclic and historical.¹⁵ The mythical understanding of time refers to the primordial 'time' before the origin of the world. It refers to the unfolding of the gods and goddesses of mythology. Cyclic time refers to the proper working of nature, organic and inorganic, vegetative and animal. It refers to the ever recurring process of nature. In cyclic time there emerges nothing new; the old repeats itself. The third is historical time. It is rooted in the consciousness and freedom of man whereby man creates himself and the world around him. He transforms the world and is in turn transformed by the world.

It is in historical time that the dialogue between God and man takes place. In fact, this dialogue constitutes history. Kappen says, when man - consciously or subconsciously - lets himself fall from the historical into cyclic time, God is reduced to a moment in the cyclic process, his challenge to create a new humanity of beauty and love goes unheeded, and religion becomes divorced from morality. Cult has a tendency to reduce God to mythical time and cyclic time. It can, thus, degenerate into certain practices that amount to making the living God an object of magic and can be manipulated by man. Kappen says that the proliferation of cult in any religion is in direct proportion to the refusal of man to respond to God's call for justice and love.

The prophets of the Old Testament showed that the alienation of God through cult, magic and cyclic time is a denial of the living God.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 39

14. S.Kappen, *Liberation Theology and Marxism*, pp. 39-40

15. See S. Kappen, "Mercy not Sacrifice." in: *Jesus Today*, pp. 124-125.

Therefore, their call was to encounter the living God by responding to him unconditionally by practising justice and love by caring for the poor and the oppressed (Amos 5:21-24; Is 1:11-17; Hos 4:1-12; 6:4-16; Jer 22:13-16). In the same spirit of the prophets Jesus calls everyone to encounter the living God in history by responding to him by loving one's neighbour. All the law and the prophets are summarized in the command of love. (Mt 7: 12). Jesus rejects a cult that has nothing to do with mercy and justice (Mt 2:12-13). He repudiates the magical belief in God (Mt 6:7). Only that prayer is genuine which presupposes and promotes reconciliation (Mk 11:25). In the cleansing of the temple there is the powerful expression of Jesus' attitude towards a cult which seems to remove God from the history of moral demands. According to Kappen, the holiness of the temple which he wants to preserve is from the alienation of religion by being involved in the buying and selling of the offerings.¹⁶ Therefore, the cleansing of the temple was the prophetic protest against the alienated expressions of religion and the call to a new kind of religious symbolism which helps us to encounter the living God in history.

3. Jesus, the Mediator of Divine Presence in History

The theandric practice of recognizing the continued presence and activity of the Divine in history involves an interpretation of the person and message of Jesus. In his understanding of the theandric practice, Kappen suggests that we have to revise the conception of Jesus as the definitive revelation in the sense that it was a concrete event of past history but transcended history. Whoever tries to interpret the person of Jesus cannot avoid the fundamental question, 'Who is Jesus?'. It is not necessary to answer this question in ontological categories as it is traditionally done in the Christological doctrines, as if only one system of metaphysics has absolute and universal validity or the interpretation needs to be in ontological categories. Nor can any interpretation claim to have exhausted the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ.

But a Christology of the meta-historical "Christ", who is sitting at the right hand of the Father and is the object of worship and dogma, can be manipulated to legitimize every form of Christian imperialism. If it is in the history of the humankind that the presence of the Divine is being experienced as a gift and a challenge, revealing himself as transcendent and calling the human to discover the Divine presence

16. *Ibid.* pp. 128 -129

as the ultimate future meaning of the human, who is Jesus in relation to this Divine? Kappen says: "Jesus is a unique, hitherto unparalleled manifestation of the Transcendent as immanent in the flow of history, a sure way and guide to humanity's ultimate future."¹⁷

This traditional interpretation of the person and message of the historical Jesus cannot answer the quest of the Indian masses for total or integral liberation. Therefore, Kappen attempts an interpretation of the person and message of the historical Jesus avoiding the Christological titles found even in the Synoptic gospels, although he recognizes them as the source of his own interpretation. Kappen attempts to present Jesus as a real man, a member of the human family who has taken hold of the ultimate concern of the full flowering of the human person. In experiencing him as an authentic human being, one encounters the divine. Kappen's contention is that the very humanness of Jesus is the manifestation of the divine.

Kappen's interpretation of the person of Jesus is "from below", from the man Jesus, in whom those who encountered him in his person and actions found the unique manifestation of the divine. It is recognizing who Jesus is from the Jesus' praxis as witnessed by those who followed him, and confirming everything we know about him through the gospels by following him and committing ourselves to the vision of Jesus in our actual history. The Christology that emerges from this hermeneutic cycle of theandric practice and reflection cannot say anything final about Jesus but only begin to interpret him. It is the vocation of the disciples to walk with him by realizing his values through prophetic praxis and thus help to bring about his final coming, Kappen concentrates more on the function of Jesus as the Prophet of the new humanity. But still there emerges a picture of Jesus which, for the disciples of Jesus, separates him from all the prophets and religious reformers.

a. Jesus, the Prophet

In the Indian context what is distinctive about Jesus that can transform the society is his function as prophet. Kappen's interpretation of Jesus emerges in his understanding of him as the prophet who in his person, words and deeds sowed the seeds of a new humanity. The God of the Hebrews was the God who was experienced in historical events. In the beginning, the faith was focused on the past intervention of God in the exodus experience, but with the beginning

17. S. Kappen, *Liberation Theology and Marxism*, p. 46.

of prophecy it was shifted to the future, the definitive intervention of God at the end-time. But the future was conceived as emerging out of the overcoming of the evils of the present. So the prophetic task was the denunciation of social evils and everything that dehumanizes and prevents man from becoming what he is called to be. The prophet calls upon his contemporaries to respond to the challenge of the future, the realization of the ultimate hope. He actualizes what all the members of the society are potentially. He sums up in his own person the past, the present and the future of the culturally disprivileged and the oppressed.

Jesus stands in the line of the great prophets Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah and so on.¹⁸ But there is a difference between them and Jesus. Kappen says: "More than any other prophet and in a unique manner he was taken hold of by the horizon of humankind's hope for the fullness of freedom and love."¹⁹ What makes him different from his forbears and contemporaries is also the way in which he understood the realization of humankind's hope, which he called the reign of God already germinating in the present, *in his presence*.²⁰ For Jesus, the realization of this absolute horizon of hope, which he called the kingdom of God, was not only a possibility but also a certainty, not only a project but also a promise.²¹ At the realization of the kingdom the human would be liberated from all kinds of alienations. Although the initiative is from God, it needs human co-operation and, therefore, it is a divine and human activity.

The reign of God, thus, is a gift and a task and as such it has to be created in dialogue with God, not relying on human resources but by responding actively to the work of God in history. Thus the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus²² is on the one hand, the liberation from everything that prevents the human from what he/she ought to be, and on the other hand, the full flowering of the human on our planet. Kappen says: "In other words, it is not only freedom from but also freedom for-creativity, community and love."²³ In this perspective the kingdom may be described as "the definitive reconciliation of man with nature, with other persons, with God and with himself."²⁴ Two things were clear in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom. First, the full

18. See S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, p. 53. See also S. Kappen, "The Prophet of Hope", in: *Jesus Today*, p.2.

19. S. Kappen, "The Prophet of Hope", in: *Jesus Today*, p.2.

20. See S. Kappen, *Jesus and Cultural Revolution - An Asian Perspective*, p. 17.

21. See S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, p. 56.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

flowering of the human person and human community is a future project and it is not any future but the absolute future free from all alienations. Second, this absolute future is already impinging on the present, germinating in the present, in his own person, in his word and deed. According to Kappen, whether Jesus believed himself to be the 'one who is to come' is a doubtful question. But what is beyond doubt is that he saw in the cures he worked so many signs of God's saving presence. In and through his words and deeds the reign of God became a matter of human experience.²⁵ Thus he attributes the finger of God to all his miracles (Lk 11.20). He summed up his mission in terms of healing and exorcising. That was also his testimony to the disciples of John (Lk 7:22-23). However, Jesus did not see the reign of God present exclusively in his own person, in his historical presence. It is also present wherever one comes lovingly to the aid of one's neighbour. Kappen says: The visage of the New Age may be discerned wherever the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the leper is rendered whole, the prisoners set free, the unloved receive love, the hopeless regain hope. It announces his presence, wherever fetters are broken, and man-made walls are demolished to let each man be all men.²⁶

Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God in the context of a twofold cultural domination suffered by the Jewish society, the hellenization and the oppressive Judaism with its cult, law and apocalypticism. The criterion for the evaluation of persons in this society was guided by the category into which they fell, namely, rich versus poor, great versus least, man versus woman, parents versus children, wise versus simple, and pure versus impure.²⁷ For Jesus, the reign of God was the greatest value, and all other values stand or fall in relation to it. Therefore the values of the kingdom he preached were subversive in relation to the values of the society in which he lived. Jesus was the prophet of counter-culture.

According to Kappen, the traditional interpretation too one-sidedly emphasized the divinity of Jesus to the neglect of his humanity. Kappen says: "Those who saw him primarily, if not exclusively, from the plane of the divine it was but natural to conclude that his teaching was in all its details eternally and immutably true."²⁸ It was not in this way that his contemporaries encountered him. They saw him from

25. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

27. S. Kappen, *Jesus and Cultural Revolution - An Asian Perspective*, pp. 19-26.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

below as a man among men, as carpenter from Nazareth. Kappen says that it was in observing this ordinary human behaviour that they had a glimpse into the divine dimension in him.²⁹ It is their way of approach to him which is normative for us in interpreting him. It should be also our way of recognizing him; as a man, as a member of the human family, rooted in our soil and inserted into the flow of history. According to Kappen the historical Jesus opposed every attempt to separate him from the family of humans. He was indeed truly human. Kappen says:

If ever there was a man taken hold of by the divine and empowered to transform things animate and inanimate, that was Jesus. In his presence the chaotic reverted to form, death ebbed away to make room for the influx of life. At his command the tempest subsided, the raging sea resumed its calm, withered bodies turned whole, the leper was cleansed, the blind regained sight, the mute spoke and the deaf heard. His glance pierced the inmost recesses of the human spirit diffusing light and love. Power went out of him to heal not only individuals but also sick society and decaying religion.³⁰

Jesus was so taken hold of by the power of God that he could work many miracles. That does not mean that it was an exclusive privilege given to him. Rather in Jesus the capacity of human being reached its fullness in its response to the ultimate. Kappen says, "The greater the incandescence of the human spirit, the greater is its capacity to mould the powers of the cosmos to house its dreams and visions. And what extraordinary miracles may we expect from a man whose spirit was so taken hold of by the spirit of God that the two formed but one flame?"³¹ In this resolute and unconditional response to God that expresses itself in Jesus' sensibility to all that is beautiful, true and good, he could not but stand against everything that prevents the full flowering of the human being and thus hinders the wholeness of the human and the revelation of the wholeness of God.

Kappen says: "The true divinity of Jesus is revealed precisely in this refusal to be segregated from the family of humans, to be anything other than fully human."³² But the God of Jesus is beyond-man and in-man without being a contradiction. The tension between these two

29. *Ibid.*, p. 25

30. S. Kappen, "Power in Powerlessness", in: *Jesus Today*, p. 179

31. S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, p. 76.

32. S. Kappen, "A Lesson in Socialism", in *Jesus Today*, p. 67.

disclosures of God lets God remain God without being reduced to human, and lets the human become fully human without taking the place of God. In Jesus this tension between God-beyond-man and God-in-man becomes a reality. Thus, in the real humanity of Jesus we encounter his divinity.

4. Encountering God in Jesus and His Message

Kappen says, "the same God who confronts us in the varied situations of life also meets us in the person of Jesus. Besides, the two modes of encounter condition each other and tend to fuse into one unique encounter. It is in the light of the splendour of God reflected in the face of Jesus that we see the face of the earth. Conversely, it is in the light of God's self-revelation in our historical situation we understand Jesus and his message".³³ However, in reinterpreting the message of Jesus for today, Kappen warns against the possible mistake of past generations in distorting the message of Jesus in order to safeguard their particular interest and to escape from the challenge of following Jesus radically. To avoid such mistakes, one must be critical in one's interpretation of the message of Jesus. For such a critical approach Kappen provides two criteria. The first criterion is one's 'fidelity to the original Jesus phenomenon' and the second is one's 'responsiveness to the God who reveals himself in history'.³⁴ According to him, the Christians of the first century could not have applied the first criterion because they were children of their age and so they tended to mythicize reality. They considered myth as history. Kappen assumes that we have gone beyond this stage of primitive myth. Our interpretation is to be in the nature of a response to the historical phenomena as we encounter them, without failing to be critical in our interpretation of reality. The second criterion in interpreting the message of Jesus demands that we distinguish between the absolute and relative dimensions of the message of Jesus. Kappen says: "The absolute dimension can be explained only on the basis of his encounter with the Absolute, with God".³⁵ This encounter took place in history but its significance transcends historical limitations. The message of Jesus, then, is that this God whom he encountered is at work in history. Faithfulness to this original encounter of Jesus demands that we encounter the same God in our historical situation. Kappen asserts:

33. S. Kappen, "A New Approach to Theological Education", p. 58

34. S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, p. 26 35. *Ibid.*, p. 27

It is our responsiveness to the God of today that guarantees our fidelity to the Jesus of yesterday. The demands that God in history makes on us help us to understand the deeper meaning of the teachings of Jesus. Conversely, the teachings of Jesus help us to interpret the signs of times and decipher the divine challenges inscribed in history. In this way the Jesus of history enters into dialogue, in and through us with the God of today.³⁶

In our historical situation, according to Kappen, Jesus as proclaimed in India could not assist the liberative function through us because of the alienation he suffered in the course of the development of the Christian faith. If Jesus is to function as the liberator, he must be liberated from the alienation that set in Christian faith and practice. It is the contention of Kappen that Jesus presented in the Indian context was the Christ of dogma, cult and institutionalism, and the Christ of cosmic and gnostic religiosity.³⁷

The alienation of historical Jesus took place along three principal lines: cultic, dogmatic and institutional. Kappen admits that he does not present a detailed history of these three types of alienations of the historical Jesus, but only a systematic outline of them. Firstly, Jesus became the object of worship after his resurrection. Kappen says, "The Jesus who was the part of our history was replaced in Christian piety by the risen Christ, regarded above history, as eternal, immutable."³⁸ Thus cult separated him from the world in which he immersed himself. The world of everyday life became once again the 'profane' world, and Christ was projected as the one who can be approached only by the ritually pure. He was made an idol to be worshipped.³⁹ Kappen says: "Mercy, Justice, and love became secondary to the Eucharistic cult and devotions. The circle was complete. The noncultic prophetic movement had ended up as a cultic religion."⁴⁰ Secondly, the dogmas present Christ as alienated from the historical Jesus. He is made to pass through the Greco-Roman mould of thinking. In this way of thinking he is fragmented into abstractions such as person, nature, hypostasis, body, soul, substance, quality, quantity, essence,

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28

37. In his book *Jesus and Freedom* Kappen uses the term Christ only in reference to the alienation of Jesus through cult and dogma. See S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, pp. 18 and 21.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

39. S. Kappen, "The Not-Yet and Already", in: *Jesus Today*, p. 11.

40. S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, p. 19.

and existence. Dogmatic statements were presented in catechesis. Dogmatism can imprison the living God "through dead concepts and formulae derived from the fossilized systems of thought".⁴¹ Kappen believes that Jesus must be liberated from this dogmatic alienation to continue his prophetic function. Thirdly, Jesus was alienated by the institutions. Jesus rejected all forms of political and economic power to establish the New age he proclaimed. But in the course of history the Church became a state religion, having political and economic power. It established institutions which became the instrument of domination. Thus, by a curious development the good news of liberation preached by Jesus became the source of erecting structures of unfreedom.⁴²

Summing up his outline of the three main lines of alienation which Jesus suffered in the course of history, Kappen says:

He [Jesus] lies buried under the weight of accumulated layers of rituals, rubrics, laws, concepts, legends, myths, superstitions and institutions. He lies bound hand and foot by innumerable cords that tradition has cast around him. His voice is smothered, his spirit stifled... Therefore it is the duty of all who cherish the vision of hope of Jesus to set him free from the prison-house of cult, dogma, and institutionalism so that he can go about pointing as of old, his accusing finger at the scribes, pharisees, elders, priests, and Herods of today.⁴³

Kappen presents an outline of progressive alienation of the person and mission of Jesus in the history of Christianity. But he says that it should not be interpreted to mean that Christianity hitherto is the history of this progressive alienation. He admits that there are positive elements in the western Christian tradition which are in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. But Indians who do not share the Western tradition must seek a way to meet God as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus rather than mentally reenacting the history of Western Christianity. Kappen's attempt, then, is to go back to the historical Jesus without the trappings of cult, dogmas, institutionalism and western tradition.

Jesus who was alienated through cult, dogma and institutionalism was further alienated through Indian religiosity. He identifies three

41. S. Kappen, "The Not-Yet and Already". p. 11.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

43. S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, p. 23

types of religiosity in India. They are the cosmic, the gnostic and the ethical. The cosmic and the gnostic religiosities of India tried to integrate Jesus into their fold. Cosmic religiosity identifies the microcosm with the macrocosm. It is characterized by magical praxis and the cyclic view of time. According to Kappen this religiosity is individualistic and is founded on determinism. In India this cosmic religiosity expresses itself in Vaishnavism and Saivism. Vishnu resides in heaven and is the solar god. He must incarnate again and again to save the world. He is the god of sacrifice, the god of priests and the establishment. He is the preserver of the status quo of the caste system. He is patriarchal. On the other hand, Siva can never become incarnate because he is of the earth. Siva is unorthodox and rejects the accepted norms of behaviour. He is the destroyer of the sacrifice. He is of the matriarchal type, accepting his consort as his equal. Both of these gods of fertility have much influence in the life of the people. Jesus, as proclaimed in India, was made to fit into this cosmic religiosity. According to Kappen, "Landed on the Indian soil, he (Jesus) took more after Vishnu than Siva. Like the former, he is solar (*sol invictus*), patriarchal, conservative, preserver of the world-order, proto-type and protector of priesthood, patron of whoever happens to be in power. Still, with his prophetic background, he could not be invested with the sacred thread or assimilated to deities like Siva or Krishna and absorbed into orthodoxy."⁴⁴

Gnostic religiosity, based on the identity of the Atman with the Brahman, is the spiritualization or the theoretical vision of cosmic religiosity. More than a religiosity, it is a philosophical attitude. It seeks to escape from the cyclic time to timelessness and considers man as the appearance of the absolute. In it the dominant stress is infra-consciousness in man. Gnostic religiosity is also individualistic and expresses itself in mytho-logos. According to Kappen, for the gnostic the prevailing situation of injustice and exploitation in concrete existence is a play of *Brahman*. Gnostic religiosity thus legitimizes the situation of evil, both physical and moral. It can only inspire man to withdraw from the sphere of historical action, multiplicity, freedom and passion. According to Kappen, a Christology that integrates Jesus into gnostic religiosity would further alienate the prophetic function of Jesus in the Indian context.

44. S. Kappen, "Jesus in the Indian Context", (unpublished manuscript), cited by A. Muricken, "S. Kappen: the Man and his Contribution to the Study of Counter-Culture", in : *Religion, Ideology and Counter -Culture - Essays in honour of S. Kappen*, (eds.), Philip Mathew and Ajit Muricken, Bangalore, 1987, p. 26.

The third type of religiosity that emerged in the Indian religious tradition is ethical religiosity. In its anthropology, the human being emerges as a subject seeking its identity in relation to the divine. This religiosity insisted on the ethical praxis of loving one's neighbour. It broke away from the tradition of cyclic time and valued history and the freedom of man. It is not individualistic, but communitarian. Kappen believes that this stage of religiosity is the higher stage of the evolution of human consciousness and is in harmony with the self-understanding of contemporary man. In India Buddha initiated this type of ethical religiosity, rejecting magic, myth, sacrifice, cyclic time and the caste system. This movement of liberation, like the *bhakti* movements of the middle ages and the reform movements, got dissolved into the cosmic religiosity. Hinduism transformed Buddha into an *avatara* of Vishnu. It wanted to make Jesus one among the Hindu deities, but could not because he is the supreme revelation of ethical and prophetic religiosity. If this ethical religiosity proclaimed by Jesus is to be effective to transform Indian society, Jesus should not encounter the Indian society as Christ recast in the cosmic mould of magic, myth and cyclic time, Kappen says:

His [Jesus'] foreshadowing are to be found not so much in the Vedas, epics and the *purana*.... as in the unwritten history of the unwanted majority. His forerunners are not the rishis, sages and ascetics of Hindu orthodoxy, but the dissenters and protesters from Buddha onwards. His blood must mingle with the blood of Sudras, the outcasts, the tribals, the Naxalites, real or so called. We honour him best when we allow him to walk the Indian road whole and entire.... Jesus must remain the eternally other, the reality and symbol of total negativity.⁴⁵

Kappen believes that the meaningful interpretation of Jesus in the Indian context should be found, therefore, not by going back to the Greco-Roman matrix of Christianity or through Brahmanism, but by discovering in his historical person and message the answer to the profoundest aspirations of the downtrodden masses. Though Jesus is the eternally other, Kappen admits that he cannot do without the symbols of the forces of nature and the symbols of the collective unconsciousness of the masses. The ethical and prophetic religiosity of Jesus must enter into dialogue with the cosmic religiosity of

45. A. Muricken, "S. Kappen: the Man and his Contribution to the Study of Counter-Culture", p. 27.

Hinduism at its roots. Kappen advocates the union of prophetic religiosity with cosmic religiosity, completing each other without losing the otherness.

5. Jesus and His Mission in the Indian Context

According to Kappen, Indian society is under the grip of a twofold cultural domination, namely, the caste system of Hinduism and capitalism. This is not much different from the society Jesus confronted. In his book *Jesus and Freedom* he analyses the Indian society and identifies the forces that prevent the majority of people from living an authentic human life. According to Kappen, the forces of oppression in India have their roots in feudalism, capitalism, in the socio-economic and political life of the people and in their beliefs, ideas and values. Some of these remain on the objective level while others reach the subjective level. Kappen says, "The most intensely felt bondage of the Indian masses consists in the fact that they do not have what they produce."⁴⁶ The means of production, both agricultural and industrial, are concentrated in the hands of a few. The mass of producers are deprived of the means and fruits of their production. The economic bondage is acutely dehumanizing. In rural India, especially, the caste-system contributes to the perpetuation of inequality and dehumanization. The oppressive socio-economic system creates an oppressive state where the majority of the legislators are of the privileged classes who are incapable of legislating progressive social and economic laws. The religious emphasis on the realization of the spiritual man and individual salvation influences the devaluation of temporal activities. The Indian masses can achieve an integral liberation from all social, religious, economic and political bondage only by a total revolution, by means of which co-operation will replace competition, love will replace aggression and quality will replace quantity. It requires the re-structuring of the society and an agent capable of bringing about it.

For the disciples, Jesus is the answer to human's need for integral liberation. But Jesus was not a social theorist. He did not come to be a political messiah. Kappen says, "In the desert, Jesus definitively opted against political messianism."⁴⁷ Jesus did not propound any strategy for social change. But as a prophet who changed the course of history, he can energize the positive forces in Indian society to

46. S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*. p. 33.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

transcend the world-views, religiosity and ethos and initiate a humanizing praxis.⁴⁸ The Jesus' tradition will help India to step out of the cyclic view of history into the dialogical view of history. This is essential for the integral liberation of Indian society.

Jesus can encounter Indian society as a prophet who can lead the oppressed and dehumanized to integral liberation only through those who are committed to him and his vision. This Jesus-community that makes the Jesus' tradition come alive must enter into dialogue with the positive elements of Indian religious traditions, such as the immanence of the Absolute order, the discovery of the self within, and its symbolic and contemplative attitude towards nature.

As the supreme revelation of ethical and prophetic religiosity, Jesus can energize the ethical values of Indian cultural and religious tradition, especially those of Buddhistic and Bhakti traditions. The prophetic message of Jesus must enter into dialogue with the Indian religious intuition of the unity of the cosmic, the human, and the divine. This is the task of the disciples of Jesus who encounter in Jesus the absolute meaning of their life and seek his relevance in the context of their life in India.

Conclusion

Kappen attempted to theologize with a genuine concern for interpreting Jesus in a language which is meaningful and relevant to the Indian and Asian context. It is his basic conviction that Jesus and the commitment to his message can bring about a total liberation in the Indian context, provided we are ready to discover the historical Jesus freed from the trappings of cult, dogma, institutionalism and cosmic and gnostic religiosities, and take up the challenge of moving from the security of orthodoxy to orthopraxis. The starting point of his theological reflection from the historical Jesus and the emphasis on the orthopraxis are common to all liberation Christologies. The concern of the liberation theologians to emphasize more orthopraxis than orthodoxy is suspected to be due to the influence of an "uncritical borrowing of Marxist ideology".⁴⁹ Though Kappen admits that his study of Marxism has helped him to encounter the historical Jesus⁵⁰ he is critical of the Marxist's theory and praxis as they cannot bring about a restructuring of the Indian society. Gandhism is a spent force. There

48. See S. Kappen, *Jesus and Cultural Revolution - An Asian Perspective*, p. 57.

49. See "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation", nos. 6,10.

50. See S. Kappen, *Liberation Theology and Marxism*, pp. 14-15.

is no collective agent that can transform the Indian society because of the "fissiparous tendencies inherent in caste and religion"⁵¹. It is his conviction that only the historical Jesus can energize the process of restructuring society. Kappen believes that the liberation theology which emerges in the process is more radical and universal than the Latin American version of it because here the theologian is confronted with a plurality of religions and the Christians form only a minority. So the theological reflections cannot be churned out exclusively in closed Christian communities but in dialogue with Hindus, Muslims and Marxists. Hence, the biblical conception of God, the human and the world cannot be taken for granted but has to enter into dialogue with religious and ideological pluralism if it is to assist in the realization of the Kingdom of God or the New Humanity.

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51. Ibid. p. 16.

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visits, material help, common meetings in Synods, Episcopal Conferences and Councils are the means and expressions of the communion of Churches. Above all, the Roman Pontiff who is the successor of Peter, is the visible sign and bond of this communion among the Churches. All local Churches have to be in communion with him, and through communion with him they are in communion with each other.

The communion among the Churches may be in different levels. The communion that exists among the Catholic Churches may be said to be full and complete from a juridical and sacramental perspective. But there is another level of communion between the Catholic Church and other Churches which is also real communion, but partial and incomplete from the juridical and sacramental perspective. It is real because we are all baptized into the One Body of Christ. We may also speak of another level of communion among all peoples. After all, even communion among Catholics is not a finished and fully realized reality; it is always in the process of realizing itself. Communion in its fullness is an eschatological reality.

Local Church and Bishop

As we all know, the Vatican I defined the Primacy and Infallibility of the Pope and left out the role of the Bishops in the Church. Vatican II complemented this Papal-Monarchical model by affirming the role of the individual bishops in the local Churches and of the College of bishops in the Universal Church, of course, under the leadership of the Roman Pontiff who is the head of the Episcopal College.

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Bishops elaborately deal with the place and role of the bishops in the Church. Bishop is the "visible principle and foundation of unity" of the local Church.²⁷ He represents Christ in his Church and he acts in the place of Christ as His minister and as His Vicar and Ambassador.²⁸ He is not the vicar of the Roman Pontiff and his authority is not deriving from the Roman Pontiff; rather his authority is derived from the Apostles as their successor through the episcopal consecration and his authority is proper, ordinary and immediate.²⁹ Appointment of the Bishops or their canonical

27. LG, No. 23.

28. CD, nos. 3, 4 and 16.

29. LG, Nos. 18, 20, 21 and CD, Nos. 2, 8, 11.

mission need not be given by the Pope, but other customs and practices of appointment by other ecclesiastical authorities are to be respected.³⁰ Episcopacy is a sacrament, a divine institution, and by the episcopal consecration the bishop receives the fullness of the sacrament of Orders.³¹ But like any other ministry in the Church, episcopal ministry is a call to service (*diakonia*).³² The Council also elaborated the task and duties of bishops in teaching, sanctifying and governing.³³

Three questions need further clarifications:

(1) The relation between Papacy and Collegiality: According to First Vatican Pope has supreme authority in the Church. But Vatican II teaches that the college of the Bishops has supreme authority in the Church. How can there be two supreme authorities in the Church? Pope is the head of the College of bishops. Therefore, when he acts in his Primacy he has to act in communion with the body of the bishops. The College of the bishops includes the Pope as a member of the College and as head of the College. So the Pope and the body of the bishops are not parallel authorities, but they include each other.

(2) Is Episcopacy essential for the Church? The Catholic and Orthodox traditions hold that episcopacy with unbroken historical succession is essential for the validity of the Church and for its Apostolicity. But there are some main line Protestant Churches without this strict Episcopal system, and they hold that the earliest Church in Jerusalem had a Presbyterian system and that the episcopal system is a later historical development. But in the contemporary ecumenical discussions a convergence seems to emerge. Episcopal ministry is a continuation of the Apostolic ministry, and the non-Episcopal Churches also have patterns of ministry to continue the Apostolic ministry. Episcopal ministry has a function of episcopate or supervision, and the so-called non-Episcopal Churches have also a ministry of supervision.

(3) Relationship between the authority of the Bishop and that of the Community: In the Catholic tradition, the authority of the local Church resides in the bishop. In the Protestant tradition the final authority in the Church resides in the whole community. Would it not be possible to bring both these traditions together?

30. LG, No. 24; CD, No. 20. 31. LG, Nos. 20, 21. 32. LG, No. 24.
33. LG, Nos. 25-27; CD. 8, 11-13.

As the guardian of the Apostolic faith and as the successor of the Apostles, the bishop seems to have the teaching authority and the last word. He is the official sacramental channel for the working of the Spirit. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit resides in the whole community and the community has a sense of supernatural faith and by this sense the whole community takes a final decision and the bishop is the spokesperson of the community. Both traditions have a valid point, and they must be brought together. The bishop should situate himself in the community and function in communion with the whole community, and the community needs to listen to the living Christ and His Spirit who speaks to the community through the sacramental channel of ministerial leadership.

Episcopal Conference

Vatican II in its Decree on the Bishops instructed the formation and functioning of Episcopal Conferences to meet the pastoral challenges of today:

Nowadays especially, bishops are frequently unable to fulfill their office suitably and fruitfully unless they work more harmoniously and closely every day with other bishops. Episcopal Conferences, already established in many nations, have furnished outstanding proofs of a more fruitful apostolate. Therefore this most sacred Synod considers it supremely opportune everywhere that bishops belonging to the same nation or region form an association and meet together at fixed times. Thus, when the insights of prudence and experience have been shared and views exchanged, there will emerge a holy union of energies in the service of the common good of the Churches.³⁴

The nature of the Episcopal Conference, its competence and the laws of its functioning are explained in the Latin Code.³⁵ I do not want to deal with the canonical aspects. Ever since Vatican II there has been a debate on the theological and ecclesiological foundation of the Episcopal Conference and its teaching authority.³⁶ To clarify this question the Extraordinary Synod of

34. CD, No. 37; C. I. C., Canon 447.

35. C. I. C. Nos. 447-459; C. C. E. O. No. 322.

36. Karl Rahner. "On Bishops' Conferences", in *Theological Investigations*. Vol. 6, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969; Henry de Lubac, *Les églises*

Bishops of 1985 called for a study on this subject. The findings of this study was published in a working paper in 1988 by the Roman Congregations for Bishops in collaboration with other concerned Roman Congregations which was entitled, *Theological and Juridical Status of Episcopal Conferences*. The document was very cautious in recognizing the theological and ecclesiological status of the Episcopal Conferences. It seems that there was an underlying fear that the Episcopal Conferences may weaken the authority of the individual bishops and that of the Universal Magisterium of the Pope. It was pointed out that the Episcopal Conferences do not belong to the essential structure (*jure divino*) of the Church and that they are only contingent ecclesiastical institutions which do not have "magisterium" in the strict sense. "Magisterium" belongs to the Individual Bishop for his Church and to the entire Body of the Bishops in union with the Roman Pontiff for the Universal Church. It was also emphasized that the action of the Conferences are not strictly "collegial act", but only "collective act". Collegial acts are only that of the Universal Body of Bishops presided by the Roman Pontiff. Distinction was also made between the "Synods" and "Councils" of the Individual Churches and the Episcopal Conference of a region or nation. The former is a "sacramental" body having magisterium in the strict sense, and the latter only an ecclesiastical, contingent institution for pastoral purpose of consultation and co-ordination, meant only to help individual bishops. This Roman document, indeed, did not claim any definitive character. It was a call for further study and clarification on the question of the Episcopal Conference.

The Episcopal Conferences have very strong historical and theological foundation in the practice of the early centuries. Synods, Provincial Councils and Plenary Councils were frequently held in the early centuries where bishops met together and took

particulieres dans l'eglise universelle, Paris: Aubier, 1971; Walter Kasper, "Der theologische Status der Bischofskonferenzen", *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 167 (1987); Avery Dulles, "The Teaching Authority of Bishops' Conference", *America*, June 11, 1983; Ladislav Orsy, "Episcopal Conferences — Their Theological Standing and Their Doctrinal Authority", *America*, Nov. 8, 1986; Peter Fernando (ed.), *Episcopal Conferences and Collegiality*, Madras: CBCI Commission for Clergy and Religious, 1989; Herve Legrand and Others (eds.), *The Nature and Future of Episcopal Conferences*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1988, etc.

common decisions in matters of faith and ecclesiastical discipline. The Eastern Churches continued this practice and synods became part of their permanent structure. Besides the Particular Church and the Universal Church, there gradually emerged groupings of Particular Churches on the basis of their socio-cultural, linguistic, geographical and political affinities. Thus Patriarchal and other Individual Churches were formed and their synods and councils were very common. Contemporary Episcopal Conferences, whether regional, national or continental, are indeed new ecclesial structures to meet the needs and challenges of today. But they have emerged naturally and under the guidance of the Spirit from the very nature of the Church as a communion and from its synodal and collegial character. Hence from the fact that they have emerged in the Church only in our own time, it may not be right to consider them as a mere contingent and accidental ecclesiastical institution. They are part of the essential structure of the *Church of Today*.

Episcopal Conference and its functioning has to be seen as an exercise of Collegiality, though not in the full sense. The fullest expression of Collegiality is, indeed, the action of the universal body of bishops along with its head, the Roman Pontiff. But there are partial expressions of Collegiality as in the case of Synods of the Patriarchal and Metropolitan Churches. Episcopal Conference also should be seen as partial but real expressions of Collegiality.

It may not be also correct to underestimate the authority and magisterium of the Episcopal Conference by reducing it to an organ of mere pastoral consultation and co-ordination. Vatican II and the new Code clearly recognized the magisterial role of the Episcopal Conference:

Whether they teach individually, or in Episcopal Conferences, or gathered together in particular councils, bishops in communion with the head and the members of the College, while not infallible in their teaching, are the authentic instructors and teachers of the faith for Christ's faithful entrusted to their care. The faithful are bound to adhere, with a religious submission of mind, to this authentic magisterium of their bishops.³⁷

37. CD. 38; C. I. C., No. 753.

The task of the Episcopal Conference to teach and witness to the Gospel is all the more crucial today as situations and problems differ from country to country. It means that the Gospel needs new interpretations and new responses in different contexts and the Episcopal Conference of each country is the most competent body for this task. The Universal magisterium finds it very difficult to address itself to entirely different situations. Pope Paul VI said, "In the face of such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words".³⁸

Finally, Episcopal Conference is the highest authoritative body of a local Church in the widest sense, which has its legitimate autonomy, be it a regional, national or continental Church. Such a local Church is, indeed, a communion of many local Churches of that region or nation or continent. But all of them have some thing in common which unites them, a natural bond of unity on the basis of socio-cultural or linguistic or political realities. For example, Indian Church is a local Church on the basis of our common cultural and political unity. But all the same, Indian Church is a communion of many local/Individual Churches which are diverse due to their historical, socio-cultural and other differences. Theology of the Episcopal Conference is seen here from the perspective of the theology of the local Church. As every local Church enjoys its legitimate autonomy, so also every Episcopal Conference has its own legitimate autonomy, though autonomy must always go along with universal communion under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff.

Dharmaram College
Bangalore — 560 029

The Future of the Indian Church: Reflections and Proposals in the light of CBCI Evaluation

Sebasti L. Raj

In 1992, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India [CBCI], it was decided to make a thorough evaluation of the performance of the CBCI, which was actually meant to be an evaluation of the life and mission of the Church in India. In view of this evaluation two National Consultations and twelve Regional Consultations were held, along with an intensive and extensive interview of about 3000 persons who are involved in the various ministries of the Church in different parts of the country. The author of this paper was the Chairperson of the Executive Team of the Evaluation Committee. He summarises here the salient features of the report of the Evaluation Committee by highlighting the orientations of the Church in India today in the various areas of its life and mission.

As the world is preparing itself to enter the third millennium, the Catholic Church has launched a three-year preparation for this great event. In India, this preparatory process is known as **Yesu Krist Jayanti-2000**. Through various programmes and activities the Church Universal as well as the Church in India hopes to renew itself during this historic moment. At this juncture of history, it is appropriate that we look at the past few decades of the life of the Church in India, in order to visualize a new direction for the next millennium. This article hopes to make some contributions towards this process. It brings out the salient aspects of the findings and recommendations of the CBCI Evaluation Report 1995, in so far as these are applicable to the Church as a whole.

Proclamation

India is the home of several religions and the greatest contribution the Church in India can offer to the Universal Church is the dimension of pluralistic approach to religious experiences and expressions. This calls for a new life-style and a new

theological language, which will promote a "culture of harmony". Dialogue is demanded also by the threat of fundamentalism and the need for a constant reiteration of India's special and unique brand of secularism. Moreover, poverty, communalism, violence and ignorance must be faced by all religions together. Thus a dialogue of life with today's pressing problems is imperative.

In spite of the many achievements in the field of evangelization, the Church has had only a limited success in promoting its mission in this country, due to various reasons. The concept of evangelization has not been understood adequately. Even some Bishops do not seem to have sufficient clarity on this point. Some still hold on to a limited or partial understanding of the meaning of evangelization. There is a strong feeling that in the past the Indian Church has been basically inward-looking and was so much concerned about its own survival and security.

The tension that has been built up in recent years among the three individual Churches/Rites on the Rites question has hampered meaningful evangelization. The Holy Father has said very clearly that there should be no confusion or rivalry in the matter of evangelizing the country. In spite of this advice, little effort has been made to make the common Commission for Evangelization really effective. A good number of Catholics are concerned and even angry at the way these conflicts and rivalries have been and still are going on in the name of Rite.

The Church by its very nature is missionary and every Christian is consecrated to the mission of Christ. Therefore, the different Churches should make evangelization one of their primary concerns and the spirit of evangelization must infuse all their activities. But in the past the laity were given little motivation, support and encouragement in this line. As a result, the faithful kept the faith they received all for themselves and hardly moved out to other areas, to risk their lives for His Kingdom. In fact, one of the chief reasons for the inadequacy of the work of evangelization so far, has been the lack of proper involvement of the laity in the mission of the Church.

Evangelization is no more considered solely a work of conversion as the concept of evangelization is broader today, as taught by the Council Documents, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Redemptoris Missio*. According to this understanding, evangelization includes not only religious and spiritual upliftment of the

people but also their physical and economic development. Thus today there is a shift from the concept of presence amongst people to programmes for and with the people. In other words, evangelization work should be Kingdom-centred in which people are important. Hence, emphasis should be on spreading and sharing the good news and its concrete implications to all people of good will. Evangelization, therefore, includes the promotion of peace and justice, the running of educational institutions, hospitals, working for the needy and poor etc.

Pastoral Care

A historical analysis of the Church, makes it clear that very often the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), the apex ecclesial body of the nation, has been more concerned about administrative matters than about the pastoral needs of the people. Often the people and their problems and needs, particularly the needs and problems of those from the grassroots, were not seen as the primary concerns of CBCI or of individual Bishops. Even when there were some signs of concern and interest in these, at the national level, the individual Bishops did not have the requisite time to translate these concerns and interest into action because of their preoccupation with administrative matters and various problems and crises in the diocese. Their administrative concerns were so heavy that it was not always possible for them even to read everything that was sent to them. Moreover, during the past decade, the pastoral role of CBCI was considerably affected due to its preoccupation with the Rites question and the consequent tension it created.

In the matter of pastoral care, the Bishops should take the help of lay people who are outstanding in requisite knowledge, prudence and integrity, to assist them as advisers and experts in pastoral matters. This will not only provide the desired direction to the Pastors but also prevent them from engaging themselves in activities that may be detrimental to the growth of the Church.

There is a very strong need to build up the local Church by encouraging the people of the concerned locality to hold positions of leadership, responsibility, etc., although the expertise of the people of other regions may also be used as and when required. Hence, in the spirit of Christian sharing, co-responsibility and Christian charity, every attempt should be made to tap the local talents sufficiently.

The formation of priests should be in keeping with the needs of the changing world. It must be a life-formation at different levels and the Seminarians should be trained to respond to the challenges and problems of the present day. That is, priestly formation should be based on the needs of the people, and their situation, culture and problems should be the basis of philosophical and theological reflection and study.

A new trend that has gained a fair amount of popularity in certain parts of the country is the formation and growth of Basic Christian Communities. These communities should be formed all over the country.

There is a growing hunger amongst Catholics to increase their knowledge about the Bible. Hence, greater attention needs to be paid in imparting this knowledge to the whole community. Various ways and means have to be worked out to popularize Bible reading and Bible study.

Social Apostolate

One can sense in India a new awakening among the oppressed classes. The aspirations of these masses are crystallized into various movements and organizations seeking liberation from bondages emanating from economic, social, political, cultural and religious forces. Besides, both at the national and at the global levels there is an increase in the marginalization of the poor and the weak, socio-politically, economically and culturally. Now with the emergence of new trading blocs and international trade management systems, this situation is bound to aggravate further. One has also to take note of the likely impact of market driven economics, aided and abetted by multinational groups, producing greater disparities among people, helping the rich to become richer and forcing the poor to deeper poverty levels. Moreover, the trend towards consumerism is as unabated as ever and it is bound to increase in the next decade. Further, there is an erosion of values in our society today. India's traditional spiritual, religious, moral and social values are slowly disappearing giving way to individualism, materialism and consumerism. Moral ideals in personal and social life are on the wane due to the forceful onslaught of extreme individualism and consumerism. Concern for others, the sense of justice to all, self-control, discipline and

asceticism are becoming outdated, and in their place, self-aggrandizement, luxury, unhealthy competition, hatred, envy and elimination and destruction of the other are becoming the accepted way of life today.

These trends pose serious challenges to the Church in India. It has to read the signs of the times, act prophetically and bring the Gospel message to bear upon this situation. So far, the Church in India has made very useful contributions towards the solution of several social issues and problems faced by the people. Perhaps it has rendered greater service in this field than any other religion. Of late, there has been more awakening and a certain amount of thrust has also been given in the task of animating the dalits, tribals, women, labour etc.

In spite of these achievements, there are several shortcomings. Some of the shortcomings of the Church in the social field or areas where it has failed to play an effective role are; (1) Its interventions in social issues are either too late or not effective; (2) Not enough in-depth studies on social issues have been made and hence it is not able to respond effectively; (3) It finds itself too weak in extending support to social issues; (4) Over 85000 women religious in India have very little voice in the Church and its administration; (5) Though theoretically there is no caste system within Christianity, it is soaked with this evil and Christians of all status — the laity, sisters, brothers, priests, and even Bishops — are part of this unjust system. Sometimes, this practice is more blatantly prevalent among priests and sisters than among lay Christians; (6) There are practices of discrimination and nepotism on the basis of language and region, in the matter of appointments, promotions, employment opportunities, etc.; (7) Women are neglected within the Church and they are still considered to be a silent voice. Besides, the Church has little or no impact on the Government and on political developments. Possibly it is afraid of "imprudent" statements and the pressure this may lead to. The Church seems to be over-concerned about safeguarding the interests of its institutions and as a result it has lost its freedom to stand by the principles of evangelization.

The world needs the Gospel values today more than ever before. It is the inescapable task of the Church to be the living witness of the Gospel, to stand up for the dignity of the human

person, for a just and humane society, and to live its preferential option for the poor and the marginalized. Thus, the "option for the poor" should become the basic characteristic of the Church's presence in the midst of the poor millions, supporting them, understanding them and walking along with them, in their struggle for survival and liberation.

The Church in India needs to express a deep sensitivity to people's movements and the burning questions, which they throw up. This sensitivity should gradually lead to a dialogue on the situation with various socio-historical forces that shape it. Only a truly local Church, viz., a community that lives the vision of the Kingdom in dialogue with the life-realities of the people, especially the poor and the oppressed, will enable it to become truly inculturated and bring about an authentic liberation.

There are hundreds of Christian and other agencies and initiatives, which try genuinely to meet the various social, economic, political and religious challenges effectively. The Church in India should develop an attitude of meaningful, creative and prudent collaboration with such initiatives, because liberation work in India cannot be an exclusively Christian project. Creative collaboration with other agencies would demand a type of spirituality, which will promote alertness to the mystery of the Divine, unfolding itself in and through secular movements and persons.

Although environmental issues are important and vital for the future of the earth and India, the Indian Church has not done much regarding these problems. The problems caused by deforestation, soil erosion, pollution of land, air and water, displacement of entire villages, etc., have not received much attention from the Church. Its role should be educative through which it should try to raise the awareness level of the people through research, seminars, public statements, etc.

The Church should make all efforts to address the structural issues and expose the unjust dimension that promotes the interest of a tiny section of society at the expense of the vast majority and propose ways and means to create just social structures, that have been propounded in the social teachings of the Church. It should make concerted efforts to translate and reinterpret the social teachings of the Church to suit Indian conditions and needs, and propagate these ideas and perceptions.

The welfare and development of dalits, tribals, backward classes and women should be one of the primary concerns of the Church today. It should take a clear and positive stand in their favour and condemn every type of discrimination against these sections of society both within the Catholic Church and outside. Further, it should pay special attention to the working class, particularly the unorganized section, and the handicapped and socially alienated persons.

The Catholic community is known for its educational institutions, but not so much for its stand for justice. The time has come for it to concentrate on this dimension of life and prove to the world that it stands for justice at all levels and has the courage to stand for this value at all costs. In a country like India where the majority of the people are suffering from many injustices, justice should be the main concern of the Church, if it seriously takes to heart the core message of Jesus to the poor and the oppressed. This implies that the Church in India should prove itself capable of taking a stand on issues of injustice, violations of human rights and discriminations, especially against women, dalits and tribals.

Women need to be heard and taken cognizance of, more so as they are in charge of the formative minds of the children as teachers and mothers. Hence, they need a solid spiritual formation, counselling and guidance. If the Church gives equal rights to women, the rest of society will follow.

The Church in India has every reason to be proud that, in keeping with the teaching of Christ, it has made unprecedented contributions in the fields of education and health. However, the marginalized sections have not received the required attention in these two services. In other words, the Church has been catering disproportionately to the rich and this elitist mentality is still prevalent. Because of this mentality, the rural sectors are not given sufficient attention. In fact, there is a need for a radical review of the Church's policy on education and also health services, which will lead to a qualitative change in these two services. The Church has to make a preferential option for the poor and it should have the courage to make a deliberate shift from elite to poor schools and from high style hospitals to ordinary ones so that the poor can be served better. It is encouraging to note that the thinking about health ministry is changing and a new thrust is

being given to preventive medicine. It is equally encouraging to note that a lot of rethinking is in progress regarding the type of education and the clientele to whom Catholic educational institutions should serve.

Dialogue and Ecumenism

The Church in India has taken commendable initiatives in the past to promote inter-religious dialogues through seminars and live-ins. As a result, a greater appreciation of other religions is evident today among Catholics. At the same time, the overwhelming perception is that it is far from satisfactory. Even now dialogue has not become a priority for the Church. While the CBCI Commission for Dialogue has been successful in reaching out to the intellectual and elitist groups it has been less successful in reaching out to the people at the grassroots level. Further, several Bishops seem to be indifferent to inter-religious dialogue. There is also a very strong conservative element within the Catholic community, which wants to keep a clear distance from other religions.

In the area of Ecumenism too there has been a lot of openness towards other Christians. However, while there have been some activities and efforts to promote ecumenism, these were only superficial attempts. Moreover, ecumenical meetings and get-togethers are often confined to the elite only and the people at the grassroots level are left out. Besides, there are some practical difficulties in promoting ecumenism because of the structural pattern of the Catholic Church and of the others, for example, the Episcopal nature of CBCI and the non-Episcopal nature of NCCI.

In the Indian context, religious harmony and freedom are absolutely essential since we are living in a religiously pluralistic society. Though in a minority status, Christians are called upon to be the leaven of the Gospel and of the Reign of God in the country. They must join hands with other believers and all people of good will in the promotion of human and spiritual values. Christians have a major role to play in promoting religious harmony and religious freedom, in their own interest and in the interest of the nation. Hence, the Church has to approach inter-religious dialogue with commitment and appreciate others, going beyond any type of fundamentalist attitude. This implies that the Church

has to enter into dialogue with an open attitude towards other religions.

Similarly, ecumenism and ecumenical collaboration have become all the more important in the Indian context where Christians are a tiny minority. In a country like India Catholics cannot think of building up the Kingdom all by themselves. Hence, the promotion of ecumenical brotherhood and sisterhood should become one of the primary concerns of the Church. At the same time, it should be promoted according to the felt needs of different regions and hence there cannot be a uniform policy. Besides, ecumenism is not possible unless the local Churches are involved in it. Therefore, the ecumenical spirit needs to be deepened and widened at the regional and local levels.

As regards CBCI's relationship with other Christian bodies, efforts should be made for a real ecumenical break-through which will come about not so much by a formal relationship but by the spirit of openness, humility, magnanimity and reciprocity on the part of CBCI towards different Christian denominations. It is noteworthy that the Second Vatican Council directs Catholics to make the first approaches towards the separated brothers and sisters, evidently by concrete and generous initiatives.

Culture and Inculturation

The Church has contributed to some extent towards the appreciation and promotion of Indian culture, art, music, etc. NBCLC and ashrams in different parts of the country, modelled on the pattern of Hindu ashrams, the usage of vedic texts in our assemblies, prayer programmes, etc., are instances of integrating Indian culture and art in Christian life and expression. From 1966 onwards, there has been a closer and greater involvement of the Church in art than before. After the Second Vatican Council, the liturgy is being conducted in the local languages, and many Indian symbols have been accepted as part of Catholic faith expression. Thus, our liturgy is no more of the monolithic Roman style that we had in the past.

CBCI has been encouraging and promoting inculturation, particularly through NBCLC and other centres, in the areas of liturgical life as well as evangelization activities. But these efforts were resisted vehemently by a section of the Catholic community. The situation has not changed even now, though the opposition

has lessened. But CBCI has not taken the initiative to advance in this line. Instead, because of regional differences, it was forced to leave the matter in the hands of the Regional Bishops' Councils. Though some attempts have been made for inculturation, the Church in India has failed to make an impact in this matter. Moreover, the efforts at inculturation were based on brahminic culture and mores. Sufficient attention has not been paid to the cultural situation of the dalits and the tribals. Further, inculturation has been stressed too much on a particular aspect of life (liturgy) without taking into account its over-all need; nor has any adequate study and research or proper catechesis has accompanied this process.

Inculturation is crucial for the survival and growth of the Church in India. But the guiding principle in promoting inculturation should be respect for the culture of all the peoples, particularly the tribals and the dalits, whose culture has been mostly ignored. Respect for a culture presupposes a careful study of it. India being a real mosaic of cultures, each one of them has to be carefully studied, purified where that is needed and promoted. Only then will each community feel that Christianity is really its own religion and not a western one.

Communication

In the matter of communication, the Catholic Church as a whole has failed to meet the challenges adequately, both in the Catholic communication media and, more so, in the secular communication media. It is true that there are a few Catholic periodicals and that there are outstanding Catholic journalists, in different secular media. But these are there by their own merit and not so much because of the interest taken by the CBCI or any other official body of the Church. There are important audio-visual centres, with highly sophisticated equipments, located in several parts of the country, which are also used as training centres for students of electronic media. To name just a few: Xavier Institute of Communications—Bombay, Chitrabani—Calcutta, Amruthavani—Hyderabad, Kalai Kaveri—Trichy, Santhome Communication Centre—Chennai, Sandesh—Mangalore. There seems to be a great deal of interest in several dioceses and by different Religious Congregations to start communication centres. Moreover, in many dioceses and Religious Congregations, priests and sisters

are sent abroad for specialization in communication media. However, in all these, the laity hardly have any part or opportunity.

The success of evangelization depends upon how prudently and effectively we make use of the communication media. However, the potential for using the media effectively for this purpose is rather weak because, in the past, the impact of communication was not fully understood and hence it was not encouraged. As a result, even now there is no co-ordinated national effort for the production of mass media programmes on TV or films. Besides, the Church does not make adequate use of broadcasting stations, the print media, etc. Moreover, due to lack of proper communication, the good done by the Church is not known to the public nor are effective steps taken to counter the negative propaganda against the Church and false presentations on matters connected with the Church, in the secular media.

In this matter one of the main hurdles is that the Hierarchy, by and large, has not seen sufficiently the apostolic value of the modern means of communication and more often the Bishops over-look and ignore the importance of the media, not appreciating its growing importance. No doubt there are over 100 Catholic periodicals of different kinds, throughout the country. But the present status of most of them is much below the desirable standard. These devote more space for diocesan news than concentrating on Christian news in general or the views of the people.

There is a tendency in the Catholic Church to be satisfied with the Catholic media that are at its disposal and close its eyes to the secular world and its media. This needs to be rectified and the Church should aim at the whole nation and the international community, and reach out to the secular media as forcefully as possible. In fact, something radical should be done to improve the role of the Church in the communication media, at the national and local levels. In the modern world effective communication is absolutely necessary. Only when the communication system is effective can any organization attain the desired result. If the communication system is non-existent or defective, that organization is bound to lose its impact on the public. Thus mass communication is a very important field to project the image of the Church in India.

Communication has to be seen as a two-way process: one is to inform the people through various media and the other is to

establish contact with the people to receive and assess their needs and responses and get a feedback. The Church should aim at both these dimensions of communication in order to be able to have effective and meaningful communication, particularly with the people at the grassroots level.

Inter-Church Relationship

The Catholic Church is a communion of many individual Churches/Rites, which are in communion with one another and with the Bishop of Rome. Within the Catholic communion there are today more than 20 Individual Churches, such as Latin, Coptic, Ethiopian, Antiochean, Maronite, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Chaldean, Byzantine, Armenian, etc. The different individual Churches emerged in the course of history as a result of a gradual and complex process. The emergence and existence of Rites in the Church is a natural consequence of the richness of the Christian mystery and the incarnational nature of the new economy of salvation. It is important to look at the different Rites, not as a threat to unity, but as beautiful expressions of the same Christological and Ecclesiological reality. Hence the need to build up a healthy relationship among these Churches.

According to the findings of the CBCI Evaluation Committee, the tensions and conflicts between Churches/Rites are not based upon differences on theological principles, but upon power struggle among these three Churches/Rites. There are two major reasons for this situation. First of all, the majority of the people belonging to these three Churches/Rites do not have much knowledge about different Churches/Rites. Secondly, on this question, the ordinary Catholics are hardly involved. They are neither consulted about it, nor are they given an opportunity to give their views and suggestions on this question. This is perhaps one of the important shortcomings of individual Churches/Rites, in their efforts to find an amicable solution to the Rites question. Had the laity been involved, they would have found an acceptable solution to this conflict. In other words, instead of looking at this issue as a pastoral problem, the hierarchy has been and still is looking at this as a juridical problem.

One of the specific characteristics of our time is that our societies today are pluralistic. It is evident that this will be more widespread in the years to come. This principle of pluralism has to be accepted. We have to learn to coexist amicably, respecting

the uniqueness and identity of different groups and their legitimate autonomy. This pluralism, however, should not be an obstacle to a healthy communion among these groups or Churches.

All the Churches/Rites should acquire a greater ecclesial consciousness basing themselves on two realities: the Gospel and the diverse Indian reality. The word of God must become incarnate in the Indian reality. This would call for greater fidelity to the Gospel and to the mission that the Church has to fulfill in India. Therefore, it is essential to make a sincere effort to educate the laity, priests, religious and Bishops, on the right approach to Rites.

While the evolution of an Indian Rite may not be a practical proposition, at this juncture of history, the real need is to find ways to build up a healthy relationship and a sense of unity among the three Churches/Rites. To promote this healthy relationship, we should also perceive and highlight the similarities and their essential oneness, instead of emphasizing the differences between the three Churches/Rites. We should also be conscious that the growth of any Church/Rite is the growth of Christianity in India. Christianity shall grow in strength not by competition but by accepting all the Churches/Rites and thus demonstrating unity and harmony. Hence, there should be mutual respect and appreciation of what is positive and good in each of the three Churches/Rites. At the same time, each Church/Rite should take care to update itself and give up customs and practices which are not relevant for the believers of today.

The Role of the Laity

For various reasons, historical and otherwise, the Church in India today is clerically dominated and it is largely centred on Bishops and priests. Moreover, a certain amount of feudal attitude is manifest in the pattern of relationship that exists within it, as it is the case in the country at large, in the social, political and economic spheres. This situation is definitely contrary to the teaching of Vatican II, regarding the role of the laity in the life of the Church.

Some of the discriminations suffered by the laity are: (a) Most of the Church resources are spent for the formation of the clergy and the religious; (b) CBCI organizes seminars and meetings to foster lay leadership mostly at the national level but not at

the regional level and as a result the ordinary people are unable to benefit by these programmes; (c) The laity are not involved in the administrative and decision-making processes of the Church at different levels; (d) The laity are not given an adequate role in the secular sphere which is proper to them according to the Second Vatican Council; (e) Serious efforts have not been made to train lay leaders and the laity are not encouraged sufficiently.

Because of these experiences, there is a strong feeling among the laity today that they are meant to pray, pay and obey and nothing more. In other words, they have the feeling, that they are the voiceless and passive members of the Church and not participants in moulding its life or in promoting the Kingdom. They are still at the receiving end and are only beneficiaries rather than partners in the life of the Church. Among the laity, women are the worst victims of neglect.

The Bishop is the pastor and leader of the ecclesial community by virtue of an apostolic mandate. His role is to animate the whole diocese towards the fulfillment of its mission. The priests form a college that collaborates with the Bishop in the fulfillment of his leadership role in carrying out the mission of the Church. The religious are a charismatic group within the local Church. They keep the ecclesial community open to the movements of the Spirit, especially with regard to the building up of the Kingdom of God. The laity constitute the witnessing community and the body of Christ. They make the Church present in every sphere of human life. These four groups are related by virtue of the sacrament of Baptism and by virtue of their common mission towards the world. In any initiative towards the fulfillment of the mission of the Church, it is necessary that all these four groups are involved at all levels, namely, at the level of planning, programming and implementing the programme. Each one of them will carry out the role that is proper to it and work together in collaboration with the rest, having the same vision and objective.

Speaking about the participation of the laity, the Second Vatican Council says: "The Church has not been truly established, and is not yet fully alive, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ among men, unless there exists a laity worthy of the name working along with the hierarchy" (AG 21). This implies that the hierarchy must foster and encourage lay people to assume responsibilities for the

proper running of the Church. This needs to be fostered in all spheres of life — liturgical life, administrative services, educational and health services, evangelization, political activities, etc. In other words, the Church should be a genuine communion of people, where there is co-responsibility and co-sharing in all areas of its operation. To make this a reality, attitudinal changes are required in the Bishops and in the clergy and they should be prepared to work as a team along with lay men and women. This implies that serious and continuous efforts must be made at all levels to foster cordial relationship on the basis of complementarity, mutuality, accountability and participation in the decision-making processes. Moreover, there should be a new culture that will take the laity into confidence. Bishops, priests and religious should be prepared to give chances to the laity, even at the risk of some failures, since that is the only way to train them to become participants in moulding the Christian community and in preaching the Kingdom message to the world. The next decade should become a period when the laity can look at the Bishops and priests primarily as true "servants of the Gospel", and not as "administrators". This new culture demands a *kenosis* in the Indian Church, especially in its ecclesiastical bodies, resulting in a healthy partnership among priests, Bishops and the laity, with mutual accountability in all areas.

When the laity are given an opportunity to serve the Church, we have to keep in mind two important factors: (a) They should be paid properly because they have the obligation to maintain their families; (b) They cannot be expected to be available for service as much as the religious or the diocesan priests can, purely because of their family commitments and the restrictions their employers will place on them. These factors should not be used as excuses for not offering adequate opportunities to the laity. The structural and organizational set up of the Church units should be such that it is able to give due consideration to these needs and constraints of the laity.

Women have a vital role to play in the family and in the Church as a whole — in the formation and education of children and in the fostering of vocations to priestly and religious life. The traditional society was patriarchal where women were ruled and dominated by men. This practice was prevalent within the Church too; and it continues to prevail even today. But the society outside is gradually changing and women are beginning to play their

rightful role. Within the Church also women should be enabled and encouraged to take their rightful place and play an effective role in the decision-making bodies of the Church. The mission of the Church is to give a prophetic leadership to society and take bold initiatives to wipe out all kinds of discrimination based on gender.

Networking

During the process of the CBCI Evaluation there was a widespread realization that there should be proper and effective link from the grassroots to the national level and vice versa. This link is vital for the effective participation of the people of God at all levels of the life of the Church. Accordingly, the following structure has been proposed: Every Parish should have a Parish Council consisting primarily of elected members (at least most of them should be elected), representatives of different Catholic Organizations, some ex-officio members and nominated members. Every Diocese should establish a Diocesan Pastoral Council, composed of elected representatives from the parishes of that respective diocese, representatives of different Catholic Organizations, some nominated members and some ex-officio members. Every Region should establish a Regional Catholic Council composed of all the Bishops of the Region, elected representatives from the Dioceses of the respective Region, Secretaries of Regional Commissions, representatives of different Catholic Organizations, some ex-officio members and some nominated members. The Regional Catholic Councils will send their representatives to the Catholic Council of India and work in close collaboration with it. Though, not a decision-making body, the Catholic Council of India, constituted as proposed above, will serve as the real voice of the Church in India. This organic link will ensure a two-way communication system — from the parishes, dioceses and regions to the national level and vice versa.

Financial Self-Sufficiency

As regards the financial position of the Church in India, the following picture has emerged from the CBCI Evaluation: a) There is very little attempt to become self-reliant on the part of most of the dioceses, though here and there some attempts are being made towards this goal; b) Sometimes, funds are wasted; c) CBCI's Central Pool of Funds is very poorly managed and no serious attempts are made at present to help the Church through

these funds; d) Bishops, diocesan directors, social service societies and religious superiors seem to be too much preoccupied with raising funds. At the same time, there is widespread felt need that the Churches should seriously work towards financial self-reliance.

Somehow, the hierarchy, priests and the religious have created a sense of suspicion in the mind of the people as regards financial matters. The way money is handled by them has given rise to this suspicion. This is mainly because the laity are almost completely kept out of bounds as regards the financial transactions of the Church. They know very little either about the sources of the funds, or the amounts received or the way the funds are spent. These are controlled and spent by the hierarchy, priests and religious, though most of these funds are received for the benefit of the entire Church.

Sharing of one's resources with the needy is an essential aspect of Christian life and the financial support the Catholic Church in India receives from different Christian countries is the result of the Christian sharing. However, it is high time that the Church in India, which is as old as Christianity itself, takes serious steps towards financial self-reliance, in spite of the poverty of its members and the need for several developmental and welfare projects. Any financial dependence on the West lessens the legitimate freedom of the Catholic community in its thinking and adaptation. Moreover, the enemies of Christianity use this dependence on the West against the Catholic community by accusing it of being the stooge of the West. The notion that Christianity is a Western religion or the religion of the colonial powers cannot be removed as long as the Church continues to depend on the West for its financial needs. Further, there is a lot of scope for fund-raising within the country and these should be tapped seriously and scientifically.

To promote financial support from the Catholic community, the following requirements need to be fulfilled: (a) The needs of the parish or diocese should be made known to the lay people; (b) They should have a say in the planning process of the parish or the diocese; (c) They should be informed about the annual budget of the parish and the diocese; (d) They should be kept informed of the way money is spent; (e) The life-style of the Bishops, priests and religious should be simplified. When these

are fulfilled, people will come forward to support the Church financially.

Bishops and priests who have received special training to render spiritual ministries should not be over-burdened with the task of managing and administering Church properties. Freeing the Bishops and priests from the unnecessary burden of administering Church properties will enable them to concentrate on their spiritual roles and save Church personnel for proclamation, evangelization, etc. Besides, in this era of participatory approach, and in the context of the new understanding about the role of the laity in the life of the Church, it is only proper that the laity are given a greater role in the management and administration of Church finances. At the same time, the laity too need to be conscientized so that they feel responsible for the maintenance of their Church and offer financial support to various pastoral activities.

Conclusion

The Church is called upon to continue the salvific events of the Paschal Mystery. Being the Sacrament of Salvation, the Church makes salvation present to the world. But since the Church has to carry out this mission in an ever-changing world, which is also the divine plan, it should undergo a constant renewal, i.e., on-going self-criticism and necessary adaptation. Through this process, the Church in India has to work out its future mission, within the context of a secular and modernizing India. When this process takes place, certain aspects of the prevailing structural arrangements, legal or juridical provisions, some liturgical practices etc., are bound to become less relevant in course of time. While traditions have a definite value, the mission of the Church is not merely to uphold uncritically the traditions of the past, but to contribute to that rich treasure by adapting these to suit every era. The Church should become aware of this fact and remain ever open and allow, and even encourage, constructive criticism as a way of life so that it can adapt itself, in the light of the Gospel, according to the signs of the times and prove to be an effective instrument of social and spiritual transformation.

Asian Synod and Concerns of the Local Church

Gali Bali

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia was inaugurated in Rome on 19th April 1998 and concluded on 14th May. Bishop Gali Bali of Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India, was one of the delegates of the Synod. He vividly presents here the themes, issues and ideas presented in the Synod by the 200 or more interventions. The main thrust of the interventions was the urgent need of establishing truly authentic local Churches in Asia, Churches where the Gospel of Jesus Christ becomes incarnate in the people, Churches which are really indigenous and inculturated, Churches shaped by the Asian realities.

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia was inaugurated in St. Peter's Basilica at 9.30 a. m. on 19th April, 1998 by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II who presided over the solemn concelebration of the Holy Eucharist which truly reflected the wealth and variety of Asian traditions, customs and languages. The Pope in his homily set the tone for Synodal reflections by commenting on Rev. 1:11 in these words: "During the Synod we want to listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches, so that they may proclaim Christ in the Context of Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism and all those currents of thoughts and life which are already rooted in Asia before the preaching of the Gospel started. And, we want to reflect together on how the message of Christ has been accepted by people today and how today the history of salvation continues among them and how the words of the Good News re-echo in their souls. We shall ask in prayer and in mutual listening how Christ 'the stone which the builders rejected' (Ps. 118: 22), can still be the corner stone for building the Church in Asia".

On the following day at the general meeting of the Synod Cardinal Stephan Kim of Seoul, one of the three presidents delegate, made the opening speech expressing sentiments of gratitude

to the Holy Father for convoking the Synod and placed before the house the challenges and hopes in Asia. Cardinal Jan P. Schotte, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops presented a report recalling the various stages of preparation for this Special Assembly which has its origin in the series of Continental and Regional Synods proposed by the Holy Father in his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* as part of a global preparation for the Great Jubilee of the year 2000. In this document the Pope explained also the reasons for convoking the Special Assembly for the entire Asian Continent (cf. TMA 38).

Two hundred and fifty four delegates participated in the Synod for Asia, among whom there were some ex-officio, namely Asian Cardinals, heads of the Oriental Churches in Asia, Patriarch of Jerusalem of the Latins, presidents of the National Episcopal Conferences, Secretary General of FABC and heads of the Ecclesiastical Territories without an Episcopal Conference (Macao, East Timor, Kazakhstan Siberia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia), General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops and heads of the departments of the Roman Curia. Then there were the elected representatives of the Episcopal Conferences of Asia, 10 members elected by the Union of Superior Generals of men, 23 members by Papal nomination (including bishops from Canada, South-Africa, Guyana, U. S. A., La reunion, Brazil, the Netherlands and Germany); then we have 18 experts and 40 auditors by Papal appointment (diocesan priests 5; religious priests 5; brothers 2; sisters 8; lay men 12 and lay women 8) and 6 Fraternal Delegates by Papal invitation.

The three presidents delegate appointed by the Holy Father to moderate the sessions were 1. Cardinal Stephan Kim Sou-Hwan, Archbishop of Seoul (Korea); 2. Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of peoples; 3. Cardinal Julius Riyadi Dharmatmadja, S. J., Archbishop of Jakarta (Indonesia). The Pope also appointed Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-Hsi, S. J., bishop of Kaohsiung (Taiwan, R. O. C.) as the General Rapporteur and Archbishop Thomas Menampampil, S. D. B; Archbishop of Guwahati as the special Secretary of the Synod. Asia is a continent of ancient religions and cultures; it is also home to almost 85 percent of the world's non-christians. Nearly sixty percent of the world's population lives in Asia. While the catholics in the world are 989.366.000 the Asian catholics

amount to 101.210.000 with 470 ecclesiastical circumscriptions. Moreover the Asian continent is home to a quarter of the world's poor. It is against this background that the Pope selected the topic of the Synod: Jesus Christ the Saviour and His mission of Love and Service in Asia: "that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10: 10). Cardinal Paul Shan in his relatio presented a wide spectrum of situations, problems, challenges and hopes of this vast continent against the background of *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL) which is the working document of the Synod.

Bishop after bishop addressing the Synod in the first two weeks expressed common hopes for the future of the local churches in Asia. They spoke from the heart, expressing ideas familiar to them that have emerged during the past twenty five years in the discussions, deliberations and statements of the Episcopal conferences and FABC. They spoke of a "new way of being Church" with a vision of the Church as a communion of communities. They described evangelization as "triple dialogue" with local culture, religion and the poor. The main thrust of the interventions was the establishment of a truly local Church, a Church incarnate in people, a Church indigenous and inculturated, a Church shaped by its relationship with the Asian World and its society around it, a Church involved in triple dialogue.

There were about 200 interventions (speeches) in the Synod hall followed by group discussions on important questions and preparation of propositions. The following are the major themes that have emerged:

1. Inter-religious dialogue (23 interventions); 2. local Church (18); 3. inculturation (16); 4. option for the poor (11); 5. God-experience, Asian Spirituality (10). There were a good number of topics which figured in the interventions and group discussions. Some of these topics are given sufficient coverage in this article while other minor ones are left out due to want of space. The whole trend of the speeches and discussions in the Synod was very positive and full of hope for the future.

There was a strong recommendation of dialogue between bishops and theologians to foster mutual understanding and to develop theology in the Asian context. Sufficient encouragement was given to theologians. Suitable and creative ways need to be found for promoting inculturation in the fields of theology, liturgy,

formation of priests and religious, catechism, spirituality, popular religiosity etc.

Several speakers emphasized the importance of God-experience and contemplation. People in Asia are characterized by a deep quest for the experience of God. God-experience leading to Communion and harmony holds primacy in Asian religious culture and spirituality, said bishop Benedict Osta of Patna. In Asia, words are not enough; it is the religious experience that transforms one's life and gives credibility to what one says and does. The missionary, according to John Paul II, is the contemplative in action. Contemplation is the well-spring of all missionary activity. In Asian context, God-experience is highly valued and those who have it are sought out by religious seekers as their spiritual guides. Hence, it is necessary for every Christian to deepen his/her experience of God in the daily encounter with Him, especially in the word of God, in prayer and in the Sacraments, as the source of one's witness and missionary proclamation.

It was also proposed that Asian theology must be above all contemplative and mystic, following the apophatic tradition of the Fathers of the Church who did not trust concepts, but preferred the symbolic evocation of the mysteries of the liturgy. Too much of intellectual speculation on the ineffable mystery has provoked so many ruptures in the church of Christ in Asia from the early centuries. Hence it is necessary to give priority to adoration and share the experience of the Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Church's life and mission was stressed by some speakers. The Holy Spirit is the primary agent in evangelization in the multi-cultural and the multi-religious context of Asia. In this connection Archbishop Ivan Dias of Mumbai emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in the various elements of evangelization such as ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue, inculturation and human promotion. Bishop Vianney Fernando of Kandy, calling for a re-orientation of our discipleship of Jesus in our missionary context proposed Blessed Joseph Vaz, the Indian missionary who saved the Church in Sri Lanka in a situation of persecution in the 17th century, as the missionary example whose mission flowed from prayer and contemplation and who was imbued with a spirituality based on *Kenosis* rooted in the Asian religious values of asceticism, renunciation and evangelical poverty. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the congregation for the Doctrine of

the Faith, making reference to the importance of Spiritual experience for the proclamation of the Gospel put forth a clear distinction between faith and experience. Faith is a gift from God, almost an anticipation given to us by Divine Love, which precedes our action. In faith, God opens His heart for us and communicates Himself; experience, then is the appropriation of faith. Hence, faith is common and universal; experience is in itself personal and individual. Only faith unites and synthesizes always our fragmentary experiences; faith is the criterion and the measure of experiences, the guide which gives us light in the path of experiences.

The speeches of the Synod fathers are more valuable and powerful compared to the other reports that came up in the Synod. In elaborating various topics in this article I have purposely drawn attention to the voice of various speakers as the speeches have a cutting edge and make an interesting reading. Since there were several repetitions I had to be selective in my references to the speakers keeping in view the purpose of this article.

Local Church and Ecclesial Communion

The Church is a community of persons in communion with the Holy Trinity and in communion among themselves. The local church is called to be a church of communion in which all the baptized are actively and fruitfully engaged, according to one's vocation, in every area of church's life and mission, and the gifts and charisms of each one are recognized and put to the service of building up God's Kingdom.

A large number of speakers expressed that the local church should become a participatory church. The visible effects of communion are harmony within the community and service to others and solidarity. They strongly felt that our believing and worshipping communities should become sharing communities. Many suggested that such a form of communion can be best achieved in relatively small groups whose members know one another personally and whose leaders can share intimately in the sufferings and joys of the members. Hence the need for establishing small christian communities in the parishes which will become a communion of communities where laity, religious and clergy recognize and accept one another with union of minds and hearts as sisters and brothers.

Bishop Josef Suwathan of Manado, Indonesia, reminded the Synod that living together as a community, as an extended family of brothers and sisters is an important feature of Asian culture, and different from the individuality of the Western life style and hence the Asian church should show more clearly the *Communio Fidelium*. While we are challenged to intensify inter-religious dialogue and dialogue with culture, we need to improve our capacity to dialogue at grassroots level — among priests who work in the same parish, as well as between priests, religious and laity and thus it will lead to a participatory church with common vision and involvement in pastoral planning and even decision-making, says Sr. Janet Wang, president, Conference of major Superiors of women of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei. She called upon the consecrated persons in a special way to be witnesses of fraternal life in community in the midst of a world that is torn by conflict and division.

If communion and fellowship are to be promoted in the church we have to shed the image of power and strength, competency and human efficiency and follow the example of early church where the power of the Spirit was very visible, said Bishop Gratian Mundadan of Bijnor; he called for a return to the sources in the spirit of Vatican II and Jubilee 2000. Fr. Alex Ukken, Prior General of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate called for a radical renewal of the Church beginning with self criticism and repentance for the past attitude of triumphalism and domination. A Kenotic and Charismatic Church rather than an institutionalized church with power structures is the need of the hour.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith called for re-examination of our institutions to see if they are still necessary today. Drawing an example from the Bible he said that there were real reasons to fear that the Church wore too many institutions of human right, which then became like Saul's armour too heavy for David to wear and walk for the battle. The only institutional element essential for the Church is the one given by the Lord that is the Sacramental structure of the people of God centered on the Eucharist.

Local Church and Inter-Ecclesial Communion

Communion within the local church leads to solidarity among the churches. Inter-ecclesial communion calls for mutual

understanding and a common pastoral and missionary approach to the Church's mission, respecting at the same time the autonomy and rights of each church. It means also legitimate initiatives in the exercise of pastoral care, missionary understandings etc. Charity and unity are to be the characteristics of their relationship.

In the Middle East, the Council of Oriental Catholic Patriarchs (C. P. C. O.) helped mutual understanding and collaboration. But today the Particular Churches in this region are undergoing adverse socio-political and cultural changes posing a serious problem to preserve their identity. Hence, Bishop Bechara Rai of Jbeil of the Maronites in Lebanon, called for strong bonds in the hierarchy to keep their faithful alert and give them awareness of having a common destiny and enable them to face the challenge. Cardinal Silvestrini, Prefect of the Congregation of the Oriental Churches, said that the Oriental Catholic Churches within the patriarchates or the "Sui Juris Churches" with their long experience of synodal practice and with their zealous fidelity to live and transmit the faith in very difficult situations and their consciousness of the true value of communion with the Church of Rome can be an inspiration to the other Churches. The Federation of the Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) has been an important factor in developing inter-ecclesial communion in the regions of South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia. The wide range of its Theological and Pastoral Institutes has enabled the various particular churches to know one another, to share experiences, to confront problems together and to propose common action plans.

Inter-Ecclesial Communion and the Church of China

There was a general appeal in the Synod for a common concern of all the Asian Churches for the Church in China. The underground Church of China, which is loyal to the Pope, is still subject to persecution from the Chinese communist authority. The Chinese Bishops' Conference established in 1989 by 57 loyal bishops of the underground Church, asks the Synod for its solidarity, love and communion towards the persecuted brethren, says Bishop Andrew Tsien Chih — Chun of Hualien, Taiwan; he further pleads that the Synod encourages the loyal bishops recognizing their conference and declaring openly to the bishops in the open church that, to be a bishop of the Catholic Church, one must

clearly abjure the principles of patriotic Association and profess Communion with the Pope and the universal Church.

Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-Kium, Coadjutor of Hong Kong, appealed to the Synod to work for reconciliation without taking sides between the so-called patriotic Church and the underground Church. While admiring the firm stand of those in the underground, let us have understanding and respect towards those who are struggling in a situation of compromise, he said. Making concrete suggestions to help the Church in China Fr. Heinrich Barlage, Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word, proposed that the Asian Churches seize the Kairos moment to bring Gospel values to China; he has drawn attention to the needs of the church in China for Bibles and commentaries, for apostolate of the press and communications and for formation of the young clergy and teaching material.

The Local Church and the Universal Church

The question of the relationship of the local church to the universal church was raised by several speakers. The communion of the local church with the universal church and her visible head, the Pope, the successor of Peter, is an essential part of the Catholic faith. The relationships between the local church and the universal church are guided by the principle of unity of faith, charity, collegiality and subsidiarity. Unity and collegiality are important gifts of the Spirit in the Catholic Church and are appreciated by the other christian Churches (IL 38).

Several speakers pleaded for more autonomy to the local churches in areas of dialogue, inculturation, adaptation etc. While maintaining the unity of faith more room could be made for diversity in the ways in which the local church, through prudent discernment of local needs, determines pastoral priorities and its related structures. Thus the churches in Asia would be able to contribute better in the theological, spiritual, pastoral and missionary fields for the development of the people of Asia. Some speakers made critical remarks on the Roman Curia, chiefly regarding the regulation that translation of liturgical texts should be submitted to the Holy See to be examined by people who do not know the respective languages and the consequent and undue delay in their approval. Bishop Francis Hadisumarta of Manokwari —

Sorong of Indonesia, called for a change in the relationship between National Episcopal conferences and the Roman Dicasteries with more powers for the conferences; he also made some radical proposals such as different patriarchates for South Asia, South-East Asia and East-Asia of Latin Rite which would support, strengthen and broaden the work of the National Episcopal Conferences.

Archbishop Cyril Baselios of Trivandrum pleaded for more autonomy to the two oriental churches of Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Rites in India as they, rooted in Asian soil and sharing in the cultural and religious patrimony of the region, has a special role and significance in the evangelization of Asia. Bishop Kuriakose Kunnacherry of Kottayam wanted that the Roman pattern of territorial adhesion should be liberalized and evangelization in modern times should be more person-oriented than territory bound.

Almost all the bishops and some of the other delegates of the two oriental Churches in India strongly expressed in some form or other that the prescriptions of the Vatican Council II conferring equal rights to all the churches to preach the Gospel in the whole world under the direction of the Roman pontiff were not respected. Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil, Apostolic administrator of Ernakulam-Angamaly, acknowledged that after the letter of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II to the bishops of India, dated 28th May, 1987 some of the hindrances had been removed, but much more is needed to be done in the areas of opportunities for evangelization and of the pastoral care of Syro-Malabar migrants in India and abroad. Archbishop Joseph Powathil of Changanacherry recommended a pan-Asian commission to be set up for the co-ordination of the missionary efforts of all the churches. A co-ordinated effort from the relevant Roman dicasteries would promote evangelization of Asia, manifesting the unity and diversity of the catholic churches. Bishop Jacob Manantheodath of Palghat highlighted the plight of the migrants of the two oriental churches saying that they are experiencing a sense of loneliness, living their christian life without any relationship to their church of origin and consequently some of them becoming indifferent to religious practices or joining sects or losing faith altogether.

Cardinal Archille Silvestrini, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, while noting the difficulties which are understandable as regards the relationship of Oriental catholics with the Latin churches and recommending strongly implementation of the teachings of Vatican II, rightly suggested that only a dialogue of charity could find right solution in each case. Cardinal Angelo Sodano, secretary of State, reminded the Synod fathers that the Church is the mystical body of Christ and the different members are animated by the same Spirit and guided by the same Head; to defend this unity during the two millennia of christian history many became martyrs and still many are suffering today offering their witness of ecclesial unity; he went on to say that in the wake of emergence of a global village it would be strange today to have in the church only a centrifugal force without returning immediately to a centripetal force toward the rock of ecclesial unity, which is Peter living in his successors.

Local Church and Ecumenism

In his encyclical letter *Ut unum sint* Pope John Paul II addressing the entire catholic church on commitment to ecumenism recalls that "at the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of ecumenical venture" (No. 3); he went on to affirm that "ecumenism is not just some sort of appendix which is added to the church's traditional activity but rather an organic part of her life and work, and must consequently pervade all that she is and does" (No. 20).

In Asia, relations among Christians have often been marked more by indifference than by enmity, and this Synod offers a new inspiration for launching ecumenical initiatives. Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian unity affirmed that if the good news of Jesus Christ had found a cold and even at times hostile reception in many parts of Asia, some of the blame for this must surely be due to the deep divisions among those proclaiming that saving message. Vatican II says: "Without doubt this discord openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the World, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature" (UR No. 1).

Bishop Boutros Marayati of Alep of the Armenians, spoke of the existential ecumenism lived by them in Syria in three areas

namely spiritual sharing, Pastoral understanding and charitable collaboration. He also felt that on the threshold of the Third Millennium, as we are called upon to re-read our ecclesiastical history and to purify our memory we could also hope to see a revision of the theological formulations which will facilitate a theological dialogue with our christian brethren.

Rev. David Gill, General Secretary, National Council of churches in Australia, extended greetings from the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) which represents nearly 120 Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican Churches in 17 countries; he hoped that the synod would act to strengthen ties with other churches in Asia, especially the relationship between CCA and FABC. Rev. Dr. K. M. George, Principal, Orthodox Theological Seminary of Malankara Orthodox Church, stated that Christian unity required openness to more than one model. Criteria for communion and authority in the church are still disputed between different families of Churches; they have to be evolved in dialogue with the Orthodox and Protestant traditions, and not unilaterally by the Church of Rome, he said. Rev. Archmandrite Nazaret Shahan Sarkisian of Armenian Orthodox Church, Catholicate of Cilicia, presented the exemplary model of ecumenism and collaboration; he said that the Middle East and the Council of the Churches of the Middle East present themselves as one state; the four ecclesial families collaborate within the council of Middle East and the Churches bear witness to their Christian faith through their life and service.

Christian unity is not a strategy, but is rooted in the very nature of the church. Unity cannot come about solely through human efforts, but it is a gift of the spirit. The churches in Asia must both pray for unity and open themselves to the Spirit's movements. Ecumenical relations should be action-oriented, aimed at giving common witness on issues of social justice, political morality, humanitarian relief, developmental efforts and education and values (RP. 52).

Local Church is a Missionary Church

Missionary proclamation is a duty and obligation of all the churches. But some of the churches in Asia such as those in the Philippines, India, South Korea and others have a particular role because of their ecclesial situation and abundance of missionary vocations. Cardinal Jaim Sin of Manila recalled how 400 years

ago European Missionaries brought faith to Philippines and today in return the Philippino missionaries and overseas contract workers are taking back the same faith to Europe and to other parts of the World; the same can be said of some other countries of Asia. In fact Cardinal Bernard Gantin of Benin, presently Prefect of the Congregation for bishops, expressed sentiments of gratitude to the Asian churches for sending missionaries to Africa and extending brotherly co-operation in the field of development, human promotion and proclamation of the Gospel; he launched an appeal for missionary solidarity referring in particular to the problems of the church in the Maghreb region of Africa in these words: "an injunction of new priestly and religious forces would give back hope of survival for a church which has been diminishing daily. A missionary SOS addressed to the churches in Asia, in the Synod, seems welcome here".

We find the best example of the laity living their missionary vocation in the Korean Church which one can say is one of the miracles of Asian catholicism. The Korean church founded at the end of the 17th century by lay Koreans has survived centuries of persecution. The Gospel was first introduced to Korea by a Korean lay-man coming from Beijing. The Confucian Scholars in Korea were attracted by the writings of the great missionary Matteo Ricci about christianity and embraced the christian Faith in Korea.

Even though there was no priest missionary in the first ten years, the laity kept the faith of the people alive in the midst of persecutions. Cardinal Stephan Kim of Seoul rightly payed tribute to the laity saying that the role of lay men and women, both in the past and in the present, is God's gift to the Korean church. Today it is the third biggest Asian church with 7% of catholics in Korea. The Cardinal further noted that the increase in the number of catholics is so rapid that their formation is a serious problem for the church in Korea due to the scarcity of catechists and other trained personnel. The Korean church is already missionary with her members working in China, Uzbekstan, Papua New Guinea, Europe and South America (cfr. *Fides* April 24, 1998).

We have another beautiful example of missionary dynamism of the laity in the church of Cambodia. It was almost completely uprooted during the Pol Pot regime — churches destroyed, a bishop

wasted away in a labour camp, priests and sisters killed by hardships, prayer books burned or torn to pieces. Bishop Yves Ramousse, Vicar Apostolic of Phnom Penh, on returning to Cambodia after years of exile described as follows the trauma of his community reduced to a few hundred Catholics: "In the total absence of signs and structures, while in prison, my people gradually came to realise that they themselves are the church—they are the body of Christ, they are the cathedral in the rice field."

Several speakers have acknowledged that Asia is becoming more and more a subject and an agent of mission moving away from the past state of being an object of mission. In this connection Fr. Raymond Rossignol, Superior General of the Foreign Mission Society, Paris, while observing the missionary dynamism of the Asian churches where Foreign Missionary Institutes have worked reminded what Pope John Paul II said in *Redemptoris Missio* that "the temptation to become isolated can be a strong one" (RM 85). The Pope emphasized the need for every particular church both to send and to welcome missionaries as it is a means of sharing the riches of different churches for a better service of the mission. It is always healthy and necessary to have the co-operation of missionaries from another culture, says Archbishop Thomas Menaparampil of Guwahati, since much of our ecclesial activity calls for dialogue between civilizations in which we appreciate one another and complete one another and thus it will promote a new missionary impulse in which there is neither Euro-Centrism nor Asia-Centrism but rather universal brotherhood.

Fr. Cognasso, Superior General of P.I.M.E, recommended regular meetings according to geographical area in which representatives of bishops, the congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and missionary institutes and movements, may exchange information, experience and discuss a better distribution of personnel. He also called for more centres of formation, cultural but above all spiritual, for those who wish to devote themselves to evangelization in environments, peoples and areas different from their own. This will ensure that they are adequately introduced to the specific characteristics of each cultural area, the life traditions, pastoral methods and spirituality of the various local churches which they intend to serve as missionaries *ad gentes*.

Fr. Edward Malone, Assistant Secretary General of FABC, highlighted the missionary response of the Asian churches noting that six Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life have so far emerged in Asia, namely the Missionary society of the Philippines; the Missionary Society of St. Thomas, the Apostle in India; the Catholic Foreign Missionary Society of Korea; the Missionary Society of Thailand; the Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Society of Philippines and Heralds of Good News in India. One hopes to see in future many such Asia-born missionary societies emerging in the local churches in Asia, and thus we can say that Asia is becoming a continent of missionary hope.

The need for Asian missionaries in Europe and America is all the more necessary today as the non-Christian religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism etc. have spread extensively in these lands. Archbishop Paul Josef Cordes, President of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" pointed out that a large number of Buddhist centres have come up in the U. S. A. and they serve as places of religious retreat for actors, managers and politicians. In Germany half-a-million people are linked to Buddhism. While the churches in Europe and America are unable to cope with this new and fast growing phenomenon, Asian missionaries would be a great help if they are well equipped with a good knowledge of such religions in order to quench the spiritual thirst of the people in an Asian way (Fr. Cognasso).

Local Church and Proclamation of the Gospel

The first and highest priority for the Church is to proclaim the Good News concerning Jesus Christ as a joyful message to the whole World. Proclamation is "the foundation, Centre and at the same time the summit of evangelizing mission of the Church" (EN 27). "All forms of missionary activities are directed to this proclamation" (RM 44). It is only when the church is faithful to the evangelical mission can it hope to make its distinctive contribution in the social, political and cultural spheres.

The necessity of direct proclamation has lost none of its urgency in Asia where Christians constitute a very small minority. The Synod, however, placed greater emphasis on a broad understanding of proclamation, one which locates the preaching of the Word within a holistic approach to evangelization. In Asia emphasis is on religious experience rather than on dogma; the

medium of approaching the absolute or Divine is not word, but silence. The Synod has therefore stressed that the most effective and credible proclamation of the Risen Lord is the unspoken witness of a person who has undergone a deep God-experience and whose life is transformed accordingly. However, we need to keep in mind at the same time the teaching of Pope Paul VI: "the Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life" (EN 22).

Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the evangelization of the peoples, emphasized the necessity of direct proclamation quoting St. Paul: "And how can they believe in him if they have not heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them?" (Rom 10: 14); the Cardinal further reasoned that the Son of God came to save the world while other great religions already existed and this means that his coming was necessary; he further reminded the teaching: "there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of God are not proclaimed" (EN 22). The Cardinal also hoped that the Great Jubilee of Salvation will be the beginning of a great missionary era for Asia under the impulse of the Holy Spirit through this Synod.

Archbishop Ikenaga of Osaka, questioning why Christianity has not progressed in Japan whereas Buddhism which also came from outside flourished there in no time, traced the reason to the differences in the human heart; he said that Western Christianity stressed the paternal aspect of God in its proclamation of the Gospel while the people of East-Asia with a pantheistic mindset are drawn more easily by the maternal traits of God inviting intimacy; he further stressed the need to follow the example of Christ who did not neglect the practical examples of life and human body when he spoke of the kingdom of God. Bishop Augustine Nomura of Nagoya, stating that in Japan as in the rest of Asia, the eyes have a more central role than the ears in the process of understanding and conversion argued that witness of life is more important than mere verbal teaching. Pope Paul VI says: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (EN 41). People in Asia appreciate the contemplative

dimension, detachment, humanity, simplicity and silence, the bishop said.

Bishop Patrick D'Souza of Varanasi, posing the problem as to how to proclaim effectively in India the Good News of Jesus illustrated the way Hinduism has been kept alive by a strong tradition of myths and stories embodied in narratives known as Katha. Since all Indians are familiar with this popular devotional literature, we must build on this heritage. This method will also nurture the necessary continuity from the Hindu experience of the mystery of God to the Christian experience. The gospel should become Yesu Katha, story of Jesus in India and thus Jesus would be the fulfillment of Indian folklore and mythology, he argued.

Many speakers stressed that greater attention should be given to presenting Christ in the wider context of salvation history and in Asian garb, using its philosophical and cultural expressions. They also advised that in presenting Christ one should begin with more accessible and appealing attributes of the person of Jesus especially as told in the Bible. Thus we have Jesus as a Good samaritan, Good shepherd, liberator who identifies himself with the poor and oppressed, the most compassionate person etc. We give a brief description of a few examples here below:

A. *Jesus as Guru*: Here Jesus is presented as the Revealer of God and the way to Salvation. The Guru concept is central both to the Vedantic and the Bhakti traditions of India. The Guru Theology does not reduce Jesus to a mere teacher of spiritual truths. He is the spiritual master who opens the way to real freedom in detachment, simplicity, forgiveness, compassion and Peace. Jesus is the Guide on the way, but he is such a Guide that eventually he becomes the Way himself because in him and with him we reach the communion and intimacy with God the Father and with His wonderful creation.

B. *Jesus as Prophet*: Inspired by God he preached human dignity and equality of all human beings as God's children; his actions incarnate God's mercy, love and goodness towards humanity and his teachings are the foundation for the right ordering of family and society (IL 28).

C. *Jesus as harmony*: Asian people, both of the classic religions and traditional and cosmic religions seek to live in

harmony with heaven and earth; with the realm of the divine and the human, with the transcendent and immanent. These apparently contrasting and contradicting realities paradoxically merge into one in many Asian Religions. The distance between them is overcome philosophically and liturgically. Such an encounter between the divine and the human, between the transcendent and immanent has definitively taken place in Jesus Christ. He is the point of convergence and harmony in the paradoxes that confront human existence such as emptiness and fullness, suffering and joy, poverty and riches, weakness and power, death and life, the temporal and the eternal, the historical and the cosmic, the finite and the infinite (IL 30).

The Synod formulated a valid principle for developing christology in Asian Context. The document *Relation Ante* says: "inculturation of christology in Asia is an urgent need, but it cannot be done at the expense of the integrity of faith. Integrity of faith, however, does not mean that we cannot present Jesus Christ by initially emphasizing those aspects which are more appealing to Asians and then complementing them with further doctrinal points" (Page 21). In the light of the above principle Bishop Gali Bali of Guntur illustrated in the Synod two perceptions of Jesus Christ in India, namely Jesus Christ as Guru and as liberator; he cautioned at the same time that care should be taken in formulating contextualized Christologies as they tend to be incomplete and one-sided, and hence the necessity to take into account the principle of totality of biblical testimony about Jesus Christ.

Bishop Valerian D' Souza of Poona raised the problem of those who accept Jesus and wish to be baptized, but because of some serious reasons they are unable to ask for baptism; the reasons given are: a) according to Hindu law, a Hindu embracing another religion is disinherited, and in the case of Muslim converts there is persecution. p) Finding a marriage partner becomes difficult, also for the sisters of the girl who receives baptism. Most of such believers wish to receive Holy Communion as they are not satisfied with spiritual communion. The Bishop asked for a deeper theological and pastoral study of this baptism of desire, and its relationship with visible Church and wanted the Holy See to explore ways and means of dealing with such believers understanding well their social, cultural, economic and family difficulties

and try to lead them to full communion with Christ and his Church. Another problem that has drawn the attention of the Synod is that the followers of Asian religions, especially Hindus, consider all religions as equally good. They are prepared to accept Jesus Christ as God, but this does not seem to be a reason for them to accept him as the only saviour. In this context the question was posed: how can the church in Asia explain that Christ is the one and the only saviour and unique mediator of salvation different from the founders of Asia's other great religions. The answer that has emerged from the workshop discussions is that the process of maturing into such an ultimate understanding of Faith that Jesus is the one and only Saviour, should be gradual. The question raised by some speakers as to why after so many centuries and efforts the Churches in Asia still represent a small number and are also rejected by non-Christians, the Patriarch Michael Sabbah of Jerusalem of the Latins responded saying that ultimately it is neither due to lack of inculturation nor methodology, but it is rather the mystery of grace accepted or refused. He further explained the problem by citing the example of the Church of Jerusalem which is a little flock of ten thousand Christians in a population of 600,000 living in the city. This little flock is continuing the mystery of Jesus Christ lived 2000 years ago in this very same land. Just as Jesus with his small group of disciples stayed on this land even though he was rejected by his own people, the Church of Jerusalem continues there to witness to him living the same mystery of rejection. This mystery of the Church of Jerusalem may be a part of the answer to the question posed above.

Local Church and Inculturation

If Christianity in Asia is to take root and bear fruit inculturation is a necessity. By inculturation the church becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is and a more effective instrument of mission (RM 52). Inculturation results from the interaction which takes place between faith and culture. In such an interaction, the faith takes visible form and becomes intelligible to believers and others, while positive cultural values are purified and assimilated into the faith. Bishop Francisco Claver, S. J. Apostolic Vicar of Bontoc-Lagawe of the Philippines, rightly points out in this connection that the two main actors in the process of inculturation are the people who are the bearers of culture with their special

way of being human and the Holy Spirit who is the source of faith. It is basically a continuous dialogue between people and the Holy Spirit as to how His gift of faith can truly become integral to their way of thinking, behaving, valuing etc.

Inculturation is a major missionary challenge for the churches in Asia. The approach to inculturation is complicated by the fact that in modern Asia no "pure culture" exists. Asian cultures are continually evolving and incorporating elements from elsewhere. The power of the western media and advertising industry is producing a universal "mono culture" which threatens to drive traditional Asian cultures to extinction. It is therefore necessary that inculturation starts with the roots and not with the branches, says Cardinal D. Simon Lourdasamy. Inculturation is to be viewed in terms of communities on the move, with their roots in the past, but their gaze set towards the future, says Archbishop Thomas Menaparampil of Guwahati; he further states that it is impossible for a team of specialists to offer a ready-made inculturated Gospel to a society. The evangelizer needs to take the pace and the rhythm of the community that he/she is serving, dwelling into the inner world of the community and commune with its deeper self, unuttered aspirations and ambitions, address its collective unconscious, and whisper the Gospel to its soul. That is the area where poets, artists, prophetic personalities and great missionaries have worked wonders.

The two guiding principles for the inculturation process which must never lose sight of the *sensus Fidei* are compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal church (RM54). In the west Asia there is a centuries long history of inculturation in language, art, architecture, liturgy, spirituality and social organisation. Inculturation is expressed today in the continued study by seminarians, clergy and the laity of the Syrian and Arabic traditions of theology, philosophy, spirituality and liturgy. Consequently the Arab culture has been profoundly influenced over the centuries by the local churches. The oriental churches in India are also an example in the field of inculturation.

The synod has emphasized that inculturation of liturgy, theology, spirituality, arts etc. will emerge only when Christians as a community live the life-style of the masses, understand their ways of thinking and speak their language.

The Local Church and the Mission of Dialogue

In the Asian context of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural situation dialogue assumes a very important role. For the first time the Church is encountering millennia - old religions in a serious manner. The Church in Asia is called upon to enter into a triple dialogue: a dialogue with the cultures of Asia, a dialogue with the religions of Asia and a dialogue with the peoples of Asia, specially with the poor as was stated by the first plenary assembly of the FABC at Taipei. But this triple dialogue should be considered as three dimensions of one integral movement of evangelization, opines Fr. Paul Tan Chee Ing, General Assistant for Eastern Asia, General Curia of the company of Jesus; he feels, since dialogue is with persons and not with abstract religions and cultures, and a person is a unity moulded by the three main influences on him that is his cultural heritage, religious traditions and socio-economic and political background, it should be considered as one integral movement. To be effective in dialogue, one must understand all these three dimensions interlaced in the one person.

Though various difficulties need to be overcome in the area of dialogue, the church, committed to being a sign and sacrament of unity among all peoples, pursues the path of dialogue, particularly inter-religious dialogue, on many levels so as to bring good to many groups which suffer from injustice, discrimination or marginalization and, at the same time, to contribute through the application of her social doctrine to build societies based on principles of Justice, Peace and Harmony. Inter-religious dialogue is a respectful and sincere encounter in which the encountering parties want to know each other, learn from each other and thus enrich each other. For the christian believer this will also include the desire to communicate the saving message of Jesus Christ.

Dialogue with Oneself

Cardinal Stephan Kim of Seoul stresses the importance of dialogue with oneself and within oneself citing the example of his own life; he grew up under the influence of confucian principles and values and as he gradually matured in all aspects of life he could arrive at a deeper level of inner sharing and expression of cultural values which led him to the personal conviction that Jesus Christ is the only true Saviour. He further states: "My own journey through dialogue makes me aware of the wonderful

challenge which faces the church in her interaction with those who are still awaiting revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It is only through such sharing that others can be led to the appreciation that Jesus Christ alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life" (cfr. *Fides* April 24, 1998).

Dialogue of Religious Experience

In Asia the home of the great contemplative traditions, the dialogue of religious experience is of utmost importance. We would have a message for Asia only when our Asian brethren see in us the marks of God-realised persons, said Archbishop Daniel Acharuparambil of Verapoly.

Dialogue of Life and Heart

Several speakers stressed the importance of dialogue of life. The FABC already in 1974 in the first plenary assembly at Taipai, placed emphasis on this type of dialogue, i. e., Christians and followers of other religions living the highest ideals of their respective faiths in the midst of others. Their lives become the dialogue in which each offers and each receives from the other and in which all are enriched. Each strives to express the values derived from their faith, while at the same time remaining open to listening and learning from their neighbours.

Redemptoris Missio describes the dialogue of life as one in which "believers of various religions bear witness to one another in daily life concerning human and spiritual values and help one another to live them in order to build a more just and fraternal society ... all the faithful and every Christian community is called to practice dialogue, although not in the same way nor to the same degree" (No. 57).

Concrete examples of dialogue of Life

Archbishop Paul Youssef Matar of Beirut of the Maronites illustrated the dialogue of life taking place in Lebanon where the population consists almost equally of Christians and Muslims; they have been living together for centuries enjoying a climate of liberty which allows them to collaborate with respect and dignity in all spheres of their life. This is how, during the years, they have formed a single yet multiple society based on mutual understanding. Pope John Paul II says that Lebanon is a message of conviviality for the East as well as for the West. The church in

Lebenon has upheld this dialogue of life through her educational, health and social institutions of all kinds which are opened to all without discrimination of religion.

Archbishop Fernando R. Capalla of the Philippines narrated the dialogue of life that has evolved in his country with two structures. One is known as Bishops-Ulama forum composed of 21 catholic bishops, 24 Muslim Ulama and 15 protestant bishops. The forum's agreements are implemented by a tripartite commission at grassroots level through the dialogue sub-centres. The agreements are: similar forums to be set up for parish priests and Imams, supporting peace talks between Moro rebels and the Government, religious freedom of Muslim students in Christian schools, religious freedom of Filipino Overseas contract workers in the Middle East, joint review of writings on Islam and Christianity, education of media practitioners etc. Another example in the same country is dialogue with 22 tribes resulting in an agreement to establish regional co-ordinating body to help the indigenous people rediscover the beauty and value of their culture and beliefs and its important role in self-determination, peace and development.

Christian schools can become laboratories for students and teachers to learn the dialogue of life. Christian hospitals and other health care projects can be places where people of all faiths seek to comfort one another and offer hope from the richness of their respective faiths.

The Synod stressed that inter-religious dialogue should become mandatory in the curriculum of Seminaries, Schools, Colleges, Universities as well as in religious houses of formation. Bishop Claver states that external dialogues that is with non-christian religions, with cultures and with people (specially the poor) will not prosper unless there is an internal dialogue that is dialogue among ourselves, between the top and bottom in the church, and all of us as a community with the Holy Spirit.

Local Church and Option for the Poor

The Church's preferential option for the poor and solidarity with those who are seeking justice and recognition of their human dignity is another way of proclaiming Christ. Such proclamation is in deeds rather than in words. Rev. Josef Sayer, Director, Misereor, says that the option for the poor should not be

viewed as a paternalistic gesture. God opts to become poor through the incarnation of Jesus. With the preferential option for the poor, the Church will project a vision that is diametrically opposed to the ideology of Neo-Liberalism which promotes unbridled and aggressive competitiveness and establishes free market policies laying down rules without consultation and participation of the poor. For Jesus Christ and therefore for the Church the poor come first, irrespective of race, gender, religion and nationality. In this way the Church lives out her vision of the unification of humankind. The Church becomes "a sign and Sacrament of the unity desired by God among the peoples of Asia" (IL 39 & cf. LG 1).

Bishop Ignatius Paul Pinto of Shimoga presented Mother Theresa as an example of preferential option for the poor. Mother Theresa's compassion for the poor was a reflection of Jesus' own compassion and love for the poor.

Mr. Luc Trouillard, General Secretary of Caritas Internationalis states that at this time of "Global village" preferential option for the poor must take into account structures of sin apart from its traditional forms of action. Action over structures has become absolutely necessary and the church in Asia must do it inspite of its minority position. Bishop Francois-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, Vice-President of the Pontifical Council for justice and peace echoed the feelings that where humans live in poverty, exploited and oppressed Jesus is once again wounded in his body and in his heart; where discrimination is practiced towards the poor, migrants, minorities etc. where land is unjustly monopolized, where natural resources disappeared because of destruction, in a word, "where the big fish eat the small fish", Jesus is crucified and abandoned; he made a reference to the speech of Pope John Paul II to the United Nations that "the universal moral law written in the heart of man is in some way the grammar needed by the world to approach the debate on its future" (5 Oct, 1995 No 3). The Holy Father said that the cross is the first letter of God's alphabet — on the cross Jesus helps us to interpret the complex realities of our existence in Asia. Bishop Carlos F. X Belo, Apostolic Administrator of Dili in East Timor, expressed his appreciation of the Holy See's efforts over the last 100 years to uphold human rights. Already in 1963 Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris* (No. 143) had publicly acknowledged the fundamental value of the UN

declaration of human rights and had presented a detailed description and christian interpretation of human rights. Pope John Paul II expressed the Church's agreement with the essentials of this document which was to be a true pact for the benefit of all the people, beginning with the most vulnerable and the most threatened. The Church's main contribution to the realization of human rights has been a process of education to make christians more conscious of the dignity of the human person, the brotherhood of the human, the liberty and equality which all humans share (G.S. 82).

Mr. Thomas Hong-Soon Han, Professor of Economy, University of Seoul, emphasizing special attention to be given to the study of the Social Doctrine of the Church at all levels of Christian education presented as a model the school of Social Doctrine set up in the Archdiocese of Seoul in 1995. Making reference to the present economic crisis in some of the Asiatic countries he said that it is not merely an economic crisis, but it is above all a moral crisis inevitably caused by the structures of sin which are prevalent in every corner of our global village and this crisis should be tackled by the principles of the Social doctrine of the Church and hence a Global effort must jointly be made by the churches in the North and the South.

Bishop Geevarghese Divannasios of Battery of the Syro-Malankara presented the example of the underdeveloped region of North Malabar where the christian missionary work has led to reforms in several areas of social life. The Eparchy of Bathery established in this region is functioning as a catalyst in the integral development of the people, giving lead to peoples' organizations. Fr. Antony Plackal, Superior General of the Malabar Vincentian Congregation, speaking of the fellowship lived in the early church (Acts 4: 32-36) which was a loving communion with special emphasis on the social message of Jesus, appealed to the Holy Father to set up a commission of experts from Asia in order to formulate a new Asian catechism of the social message of Jesus. Such a catechism will lead the whole Asian church to a real metanoia — a return to Jesus' life style and to his way of meaningful dialogue with the poor.

Local Church and Family

Several factors in Asian Society today are threatening the family with disintegration, e.g. mass migration, forced resettlement of people, search for work, lack of parental presence when

both are working, poverty, exploitation and degradation of women, child labour, unwed mothers, prostitution, child abuse, abortion etc. Many feel that the strengths and weaknesses of the Asian continent can be traced back to the family.

Bishop Jesus Y. Varela of Sorsogon of Philippines said that the family is the most endangered institution in Asia as direct assaults on family life are made by means of contraception, sterilization and abortion. The traditional family values are overturned and replaced by egoism, materialism and avarice. Destroy the family and you destroy the society, he stated. Archbishop Alan Basil De Lastic of Delhi affirmed that abortion is a great crime against humanity and against God who created human beings in his own image and likeness; he made the following recommendations to promote culture of life: (1) improve the quality of life of the family; (2) counsel and support the mother of an unwanted pregnancy to have her child; (3) counter abortion by adoption; (4) the "Gospel of Life" must be part of the formation for the laity, religious and seminarians; (5) against the culture of death promote the culture of life.

Mr. Raymond Rosario, Director of Caritas, Pakistan emphasized the importance of family apostolate and family life education to be imparted at seminary level, stressing at the same time the need for a new strategy for the formation of teachers and educators. Rev. Antony Francis Sharma, Superior of the Mission Sui Juris of Nepal described the special situation of inter-faith families in Asia. In a society like that of Nepal where Christians form less than one percent of population, several of the families are multi-religious. Such families do face varied challenges, and hence possibilities of collaboration with other religions in finding common solutions in such cases need to be explored. Such families should be encouraged to become a place of religious harmony rather than dispute; he also proposed that we recognize the dialogue of life that can and does take place in inter-faith families and see to it as integral to evangelization in multi-religious societies.

The Synod has noted that Christian family is not only the object of pastoral care, it is also an agent of evangelization and it is the domestic church. Thus the first witness to Jesus Christ is given by the family. It is also the first missionary church among the non-Christians of the neighbourhood. In this context the

apostolate of the family and the apostolate by the family assumes great significance for the future of the church's mission of love and service in Asia. Since family is the heart of Asian culture family values are held in very high esteem. Hence, the Church's mission should always be mindful of the values like filial piety, love and care for the aged and the sick etc.

Local Church and the Laity and Women

In the primitive church the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ spread to many parts of the world because it was lived and communicated with joy and enthusiasm by lay christians. Such involvement of the laity in the spread of the Gospel has a very special significance in the Asian context. Several speakers called for greater attention to the formation of the laity who by the virtue of their baptism share in the threefold office of Jesus Christ and fulfill that role in the family and secular society, the specific area of their mission. A special stress was laid on the need for systematic lay catechesis at various levels of life in the church.

Bishop George Punnakottil of Kothamangalam, calling upon the churches in Asia to give full thought to the teachings of the scriptures and Vatican II on lay people who are to be involved in preaching, teaching, administering, and sanctifying placed before the Synod the tradition of the Oriental Churches which encourages very much lay theologians and experts in Sacred sciences, evangelists and administrators of temporal goods of the church. Mr. Joseph Kurian, senior advocate of Kerala High Court, said that life of the church is not felt in its fullness as the major part of the body of the church, namely the laity, do not involve themselves in the life of the church. Only when there is such an involvement they would feel a sense of belonging to the church and be evangelizers in the respective secular fields; he hoped for a restoration of the Asian and particularly the Oriental tradition of togetherness and communion and working together like a family.

Fr. Gino H. Henriques said that laity is the third force brought out by the Holy Spirit for mission in Asia. This is evident in the activities of the laity in ecclesial movements for evangelization in Asia. The laity could challenge our churches to move from their maintenance mode to a missionary mode. Bishop

Angel N. Lagdameo of dumagute, Indonesia, emphasizes that the laity are called to become a communion of communities of the disciples of the Lord in predominantly Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian and Taoist contexts. Our vision for the third millennium invites us to a New Way of Being Church by fostering a conviviality and communion of all peoples of Asia and rest of the world in a network of relationships where diversities and differences will be used in order to unite rather than separate.

The role of women in evangelization is clear from the time of our Lord (Jn. 20: 1-9; Mt. 28: 15-18; Mark 16: 9-15). In the history of the church too women have played significant roles in evangelization. Hence, the church in Asia should uphold the dignity of women, recognize their specific Charisms and actively involve them in the ministry of evangelization.

Bishop Peter Remigius of Kumbakonam paid tributes to the reliability and steadfastness of women in developmental programmes, their interest in changing the oppressive systems, their self-awareness and capacity to work among groups and social institutions like family; he further explained the response of the catholic church in India to the plight of women and encouraged the Indian women to become motivators and liberators of themselves. Sister Filomena Hiroto of Japan invited the churches in Asia to be in solidarity with the cry of women in a prophetic way. According to her, the Church has to find a concrete way to respond to the Holy Father who asked pardon in the name of the church for the wrongs and insensitivities perpetuated against women in the Church when he said: "may this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment to fidelity to the Gospel vision" (letter to women, June 29, 1995).

What has been the response of the church to the prevailing practice of treating women and girl children as commodities particularly in tourism and sex industries, violence against women both inside and outside their homes, the subordinate position imposed on women as second class in family and society? What has been the response to the growing awareness and women's movements which demand that the fundamental equality and dignity of women be respected in thought, attitudes and practices? The Synod fathers have strongly supported the cause of women in all such matters and resolved to take necessary steps in order

to remedy the situation in church and society. At this juncture it is appropriate to listen to what the FABC has got to say: "we cannot effectively promote our christian vision of full life unless the Church as communion of communities credibly expends its moral and spiritual energy to the conversion of mentalities, the transformation of structures and the eradication of practices that deny women and the girl child in Asia their God-given dignity" (FABC Plenary Assembly 1995).

Local Church and Youth

Asia is the continent of the young; they are the emerging culture of Asia. But today the youth face lots of problems: they are caught up in the tension between the traditional Asia and the emerging Asia. As a result, they are threatened by such situations as a lack of opportunities for education, employment, confusion of ideologies and uncertainties for the future etc. At the same time they display an idealism and a generosity to give themselves to those ideals and aspirations for a better life and a desire for renewal in society.

In such a situation, the church needs to be close to youth so as to share their aspirations and difficulties as well as to provide opportunities for them to encounter the Lord who can be their light and life. Ms Carmeline Nirupa Jayasurya of National Cursillo Movement, Sri Lanka, drew the attention of the Synod to the teaching of Pope John Paul II in *Christi Fideles Laici*: "the lay faithful are seen not simply as labourers who work in the vineyard, but as they themselves being a part of the vineyard"; if youth are indeed part of the vineyard they must first be nourished, pruned, tended to and cared for, before they could be expected to mature and bear fine fruit, she stated. Mr. Nicholas Somchai Tharapan, President of the Catholic University Students' Association of Thailand, proposed a formation programme for youth which should include exposure and immersion, programmes that are empowering, ongoing and sustainable, Christ-centred and contextual leading to deeper reflection and action; involvement in social issues; study of the social teachings of the church and other religions; preferential option for the poor. Implement the beautiful FABC resolutions concerning the youth setting up mechanisms to evaluate their effectiveness, he said.

Youth are not only the object of the church's pastoral care, but also agents in the church's mission of love and service. In several countries of Asia they have played an important role in bringing the Gospel to their peers, their families and their villages.

Local Church and the Indigenous and Marginalised People

The Synod fathers have taken note of the plight of the indigenous and marginalised people, who have been subjugated, exploited and are still victims of injustice, starvation and even genocide. Experience has shown that faith in Jesus Christ offers indigenous people liberation from the oppression of evil spirits, a sense of dignity as beloved children of God, and the tools of education to overcome discrimination and poverty.

Archbishop Telephore Toppo of Ranchi urged the Synod to give priority to the tribals in the church's evangelizing mission illustrating their wonderful response to the Gospel in the hill country of Jharkhand in central India; paying tributes to valiant missionaries like the venerable Constant Lievenes S. J. he said that in the last one hundred years the tribals had given to the Church some 20 bishops, hundreds of priests and thousands of religious. Bishop Charles Soreng of Hazaribag drew attention to the role played by tribal women in the welfare of the society and in evangelization. A great number of christian tribal girls take to nursing and as such they have great opportunities to bring love, compassion and the healing touch of Jesus to the sick and suffering patients. The Bishop further described the exploitation of the tribal girls as cheap labour and as sexual objects by their employers and appealed to the Church to give greater attention to their spiritual needs offering them some security and training them in faith so that they could become effective vehicles of evangelization in non-christian homes. Archbishop Paschal Topno of Bhopal appealed to the Synod to raise its prophetic voice against injustice to the poor and powerless tribals who are in danger of being physically and culturally destroyed together with their spiritual heritage in the wake of government developmental projects displacing them and depriving them of all their legal rights over their livelihood and their habitat. Bishop Soosa Pakiam of Trivandrum highlighting the pitiable condition of the fisher folk who are victims of oppression and exploitation recommended their

emancipation through Basic Christian Communities; he shared his pastoral experience of the BCC by means of which the fisher folk are gradually transformed into a community of disciples and are enabled to come out of their ghetto mentality to fight against the social evils and to reach out to others in a spirit of dialogue.

Local Church and Education and Health Care

Education and health care are the most visible and extensive ministries of the church in Asia. The Synod has placed on record the great contribution made by the catholic schools and health care centres.

Cardinal Pio Laghi, Prefect of the Congregation of the Catholic Education described the vast network of Catholic schools, universities and teaching centres in Asia. The 425 centres of higher education and about 30,000 schools with 10 million students are a great and significant cultural potential for the church in Asia and the authorities incharge should take note of the role these institutions can play in the field of evangelization. He said that the catholic schools today face two challenges: 1. faithfulness to their catholic identity; 2. the need for authentic witness of the values of the Gospel, chiefly in matters of social justice and financial administration.

Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the company of Jesus said that working in the educational institutions is a labour of love and committing oneself to it is not signing a contract, but answering with a loving "Yes" to Jesus and drawing from this love the inspiration for the evangelizing mission of the Church. Those who are working in institutions will be able to proclaim the new commandment of love only if they bear witness to a strong sense of God as Love. Rev. Juan Edmundo Vecchi, Superior General of Salesians of Don Bosco, emphasizing the special commitment that the religious are called upon to show in the field of education which is a privileged setting for inculturation and the inter-religious dialogue of life and action, appealed for a sense of community among the educators with a relationship of participation, collaboration and animation and at the same time evolving an educative plan that will show different ways of bearing witness and manifesting solidarity. Rev. Fr. Rolando V De La Rosa, Rector of the University of Santo Thomas, Manila, argued that catholic schools should be taken not only as a tool for evan-

gelization, but as a partner deserving Church's solicitude and care. Catholic universities are born *ex corde ecclesiae*; hence they should also be at the heart of the local church's concern.

The Synod fathers expressed the need to rethink and reorient the apostolate of education. In the first place, it must be directed more and more towards the disadvantaged and the marginalised so that they can be empowered to be agents of social change. More attention should be given to non-formal education and other literacy programmes. Education must be viewed as a real evangelization activity. The education environment provides proper setting where values of proclamation, dialogue, inculturation, human promotion and shared responsibility for the future of a given society can be imparted, learnt and lived. Christian schools have often been the first evangelizers in Asia and they can serve as the laboratories for living a harmonious inter-religious life.

The synod appreciated the excellent service rendered in the field of medical care by missionaries, particularly religious sisters who have distinguished themselves in the evangelical witness to the healing ministry of Jesus. It was felt that the ministry of healing needs to be linked with the overall mission of evangelization. All christian health care workers need to consider their ministry as a vocation carried out of love for Jesus and their neighbours. Each health care worker is to be a Good Samaritan.

Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan, President of the Pontifical Council for pastoral assistance to Health Care Workers, placed before the Synod the statistics in the field of catholic medical care: In Asia the catholic church has got 3,287 health facilities with 691 hospitals, 462 medical centres, 1406 dispensaries and 41 leprosariums with 600 religious orders working in all these centres. He called for union of all catholics and the catholic health facilities in Asia in order to deal with the globalization of Medicine by humanizing it so that the dignity of the personhood of the patient will be decisive and not the economic factors. He also expressed that the health field must continue to be a point of convergence for catholics, other christian denominations and non-christians who have been serving in the medical field for centuries. He also underlined that the solution to the problem of suffering offered by the major Asian religions should be

brought to the fullness of revelation in the passion of Christ as Redeemer.

Local Church and the Problem of Globalization

The Synod fathers while acknowledging some beneficial effects of Globalization were mainly concerned about its harmful effects. They made an appeal to the churches of the First World to be in solidarity with the poor in Asia and to be their advocates with their own Governments and with the World Economic Institutions such as the World Bank, the I. M. F., the W. T. O. so as to bring about what Pope John Paul II called in the World Day of peace message of 1988: "Globalization without marginalization. Globalization in solidarity".

It is from the optic of the poor that the churches in Asia must discern globalization in the light of the Gospel of Life, says Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo of the Philippines. The rules of the free market are biased against the poor and its benefits do not necessarily trickle down to them; he says that the Spirit of the Lord is calling upon the churches in Asia to be the churches of the poor and raise their prophetic voice denouncing inequalities resulting from globalization and announcing Gospel values of justice and love.

Archbishop Henry D'Souza of Calcutta called for efforts to monitor the trade systems, to give human face to industry and business, to create sensitivity to the fall out mechanisms of globalization and to cancel or at least reduce the international debt of the developing countries. Mr. Sean Leo Callahan, Regional director — South Asia, Catholic Relief Services, India programme, strongly recommended that the universal Church, in communion with the Asian and other regional churches, establish a moral framework for the process of globalization. The Church through its teachings and institutions is uniquely suited to establish this framework as it has the capacity to function effectively at the local, national and transnational level. The Church has a distinct moral vision which is based on human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity. Such moral framework will be helpful to governments, international institutions and private organizations to fashion a future worthy of the dignity of each person.

Local Church and Means of Social Communications

Some fathers in the Synod spoke about the communications explosion in Asia and the new challenges they pose to evangelization. In this connection we are reminded of what *Redemptoris Missio* says: "The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media" (No. 37) The Holy Father then asks, "Since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the new culture created by modern communication..... The new culture originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating with a new language, new techniques and new psychology" (RM No. 37).

The only way to catch up with the rapid development of media technology and to defend ourselves from their manipulation is media education for all i. e., media literacy and critical use of the media Ms. Erlinda G. So, General Manager, Radio Veritas, says that every christian must be a communication in his/her own way in the spirit of the Acts of the Apostles, where faith was spread because of the communicating spirit of the believer. She further states that Asian values must be translated into modern ways of communicating that will influence the content, the format and the process of the communication programme.

Archbishop John Patrick Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social communications, has made concrete recommendations to the bishops of Asia: First, Bishops should make sure they have active communications and public relations offices. Second, Bishops should guarantee that there are catholics prepared in the field of communications. Third, Bishops should cooperate on the ecumenical and inter-religious levels to guarantee access of religious and moral values in the media. Fourth, on both the Conference and Diocesan levels, Bishops should develop a pastoral plan for communication and ensure that the aspect of

communications forms part of every pastoral plan in accordance with the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae*.

Bishop George Yod Phimphisan, President of the Bishops Conference of Thailand spoke of the Asian Christian Television, a new initiative of the Archdiocese of Bangkok and the FABC and its impact in the evangelization of the people in Asia. It was also noted in the Synod that the programmes of Radio Veritas which for 28 years has transmitted in 17 different languages as well as Vatican Radio programmes in several Asian languages, are proving to be a valuable tool of evangelization.

Conclusion

The Synod was a gathering of hope; it was an "Asian Cenacle"—One could see the vitality of the Asian churches in the Synod; being in minority situation the bishops were keenly aware of their identity and mission.

Cardinal Julius Dharmaatmadja of Jakarta as the moderator of the concluding day thanked the Pope and the Secretariat of the Synod of bishops and all those who have been involved in its preparation and realization. He summed up in a fitting way the aspirations and hopes of the Synod Fathers and concluded with a word of encouragement to theologians: "for the reliability, renewal and development of the Church we need good theologians to do careful and creative theological reflection. When there are different views, as in other situations of disagreement, dialogue in a spirit of love and mutual trust is necessary so that differences do not result in divisions but rather become a path to growth and renewal."

On 14th May, 1998 the Feast day of Matthew, the Apostle the Holy Father Pope John Paul II concluded the Synod with these words: "Together we have experienced anew the love of Christ and together we have seen the fruits of the Holy Spirit's power at work in Asia. Although Christian Community is but "a little flock" in the total population, it is the means through which God pursues his saving plan, which he will bring to conclusion if he finds that everyone is ready to work with him with a generous heart".

Bishop of Guntur.

Mission of the Local Church: Building Communion of Communities

G. Varghese

The need of the day is something more than tolerance and co-existence. We have to create a real community in each place among people of different religions and ideologies and cultures—that is to build up a real communion of communities, thus witnessing to the Kingdom values of universal love and justice. Hence the Church should become the Church-in-dialogue, taking the form of a servant and fulfilling the function of the herald of God's reign. Taking Jesus as model, the Church should be willing to lay down life for the sake of others. The writer is a Mar Thomite minister—vicar of the Salem Mar Thoma Church Ernakulam.

Introduction

It is beyond dispute that the Church is called to witness to the reign of God and that it has ever seen her responsibility to invite all people to enter into the experience of God's reign on earth. If it is true that the *oikos* of God cannot be confined to Church alone, the reign of God cannot be limited to Christians only and Christian mission cannot be simply bringing people of many faiths to one faith, then it is natural to ask, "What is the mission of the Church?" The challenge before us today is, as K. Pathil puts it, "In spite of the differences among Christians in doctrinal formulations, theology, liturgy and christian life-styles, could we live together as one Christian community? In spite of our differences in religion, language, culture and ideology, could we live together as one human community?"¹ The need of the day is something more than tolerance and co-existence. "We have to create a real community in each place of peoples belonging to different religions, ideologies, and even cultures. The challenge today is to evolve new models and styles of such living

1. Kuncheria Pathil, *Indian Churches at the Crossroads*, p. 75.

together.”² It is proper to look into what the challenges are to the Churches in building up communion of communities as its fundamental ministry. Is it worth while to spend one’s whole energy and strength on building ‘the church’ and/or fellowship of churches? What should be the ultimate goal of the church’s ministry — increasing the membership of the church or promoting the Kingdom of God? What are the resources needed for the Church to become promoters of the Kingdom of God?

1. The Situation Today

We can see in history many attempts at building communities. All of such building has been around an ideology, or as a result of force or of the circumstances. Monasteries, ashrams, communes etc. are examples. They may be called artificial communities. Even the Church is no exception. When Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God and equipped the disciples for the Kingdom, he did not mean to have an exclusive community separate from the given. The koinonia of the disciples was meant to become the salt of the earth, light of the world and leaven that ferments the dough. The unique feature of all these, as we know, is that they work without “any sound and fury”, but make salutary impact on whatever it comes into contact with. The disciples were meant to be animators of the Kingdom of God. History tells that the koinonia has moved away from its original purpose and become an institution with little of the spirit with which it was endowed.

In order to be a true Church it has to make an honest assessment of the present situation. At the very outset we should admit that ‘we have not done what we ought to have done and we have done what we ought not have’. We, the Church as the sign and sacrament and foretaste of the Kingdom, are called to bear witness to God’s caring love for each and every creature, but have failed in our responsibilities because of our selfishness, pride and arrogance. Injustice and unrighteousness in various areas prevail because of our failure to be true witnesses to the Gospel.

A self-criticism made by the delegates of the European Church which met in Basle in 1989 sums it up beautifully: it is a confession to be made by us all. They said:

2. *Ibid.*

We have failed, because we have not borne witness to God's caring love for each and every creature and because we have not developed a lifestyle which corresponds to our understanding of ourselves as part of God's creation.

We have failed, because we have not overcome the divisions between the churches and because we have often used the authority and power given us to strengthen false and limited solidarities like racism, sexism and nationalism.

We have failed, because we have caused wars and not exhausted all the possibilities of devoting ourselves to mediation and reconciliation. We have excused wars and often too easily justified them.

We have failed, because we have not questioned decisively enough the political and economic systems which misuse power and riches, which exploit the natural resources of the world only for their use and perpetuate poverty and marginalization.

we have failed, because we have not constantly borne witness to the sanctity and dignity of all life and the respect that we owe all men and women equally, and also the need to give all people the possibility of exercising their rights ...³

2. Church as the Community-in-Dialogue

The church can fulfill its ministry in the world only by entering into the life of the world and sharing its burdens; for love is a possibility and a need wherever persons exist in relationship to one another, whether as individuals or as groups. Many a time mission has been misunderstood simply as planting the church, increasing her members etc. 'Reaching the unreached', 'winning the heathen souls/world for Christ' and so on are still watchwords for many. These and other slogans seem to hinder rather than promote the message of Jesus Christ penetrating the hearts of the people of other faiths. If we believe that Jesus Christ has come to establish the reign of God and if we believe that we are entrusted with the responsibility for bringing about the Reign of God in the situations we are placed, it is high time we re-thought the strategies we followed and changed it according to the

3. Quoted in: Hans Kung, *Global Responsibility; In Search for a New World Ethic*.

understanding of the will of God revealed in the situations of today.

3. The Model for the Church-in-dialogue: Jesus

We see in Jesus the model for the church-in-dialogue. The faith in Jesus should lead us to the faith of Jesus, thereby making the Reign of God come true.

Reaching out to the people in the community with the message of agapaic love was the characteristic nature of Jesus; so should the Christian community be.

Relating to an astonishing range of people of various backgrounds — so-called sinners as well as saints was another characteristic of Jesus.

Challenging all his followers to commit themselves fully to the Kingdom of God and to pool their abilities for its furtherance was a distinctive mark of Jesus.

Calling his followers to believe in the gospel was the burden of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom. The gospel should be the *vade mecum* of us all.

Proclaiming that a person receives life by losing it was perfectly exemplified in Jesus' life. This should become a permanent feature of the Christian community. Christianity should be characterized by self-giving, self-emptying, mutual self-sacrifice and love.

Turning to the sick and broken-hearted and binding up their wounds was a special feature of Jesus. Hence the Christian community should become one of healing of spirit, mind and body.

4. Structure of the Church-in-dialogue: People-friendly

We should take seriously into account the structure of the Church-in-dialogue. It should not be something which alienates people from it but attracts them to it. The attraction is not that of curiosity to see the beauty of any artefact or of a sense of awe and fear the grandiose it creates. The matter of attraction should be that the people in the community feel at home as they enter it and a sense of security as they stay therein. In other words, we can qualify the church-in-dialogue as people-friendly. Churches should become community centres where people of the community,

regardless of their religious, ideological, racial, financial or sexual differences can come together for recreation, reflection, interaction and regeneration. It behoves us to reflect on the following questions to see where we are as a Church: Are poor people welcomed and empowered? Are they encouraged to participate fully in the life of the congregation, including the decision-making process? Does the local community see our church as an open, healing, compassionate community? Just how easy or difficult is it for people to have a feel of belongingness?

5. Basis of the Church-in-dialogue: Kingdom Values

Commitment to build authentic communities based on the Kingdom values such as justice, peace, righteousness etc.— which, in fact, are universal values — is integral to the calling of the church-in-dialogue. The Church, humanity and cosmos should be seen in the perspective of the Kingdom. Only in and through a community can these values be imbibed, increased and transferred from one generation to another. Justice, peace, love etc. which can be qualified as 'Kingdom values' can be realized only in the integrity of creation. Building up communities of people, characterized by the following basic attitudes — respect for the dignity and individuality of every human person, irrespective of his caste, creed or ethnicity; a sense of concern for each other, that is ready to share without being selfish; a sense of togetherness and participation shown in dialogue and collaboration — should become the purpose of the Church-in-dialogue.

Church-in-dialogue should become the People's movement involving in the struggles to bring about justice and peace in the community. It should take the role of animators, facilitators and co-ordinators. The Church should spend its energy to train all the people to take this role in the community. As a people's movement, it will promote liberation. All this can be done with other believers through dialogue.

Church-in-dialogue should take the form of a servant and the herald of the Reign of God. Taking the model of Jesus, Church should be willing to lay down life for the sake of others. It should become an open, pilgrim, dynamic community committed to the building up of God's Reign of freedom, fellowship and justice.

6. Conclusion

What is expected of the Christian community today? From time to time, as we confront new situations and as new things are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, we have to seek after new paradigms for mission and ministry. Church as the community of people whose lives are transformed and who are committed to participate in God's mission has a responsibility to move the people in the direction of the Kingdom of God. It is necessary to capture the vision of the Church as the herald of the Kingdom and the servant of the world.⁴

Taking the model of Jesus, we are to work not primarily for establishing 'Christian church', but for a community of love informed by and open to the insights of many faiths, including Christian faith. A renewed community which allows space for different identities to flourish should be our common goal. This only shall bring about justice, peace and harmony in the world. As M. Amaladoss puts it:

The Church today is called to commit itself to an international moral movement of peoples. It is in pilgrimage towards the Reign of God in the company of all peoples of good will. It has to be true to its own identity as the witness of the good news of Jesus, of his death on the cross and of his resurrection. It has also to hear the call to be the servant of unity in the world. While being a community rooted in Jesus, the Church needs to have open frontiers, ready to dialogue with every one. Opting for the poor, it must prophetically confront the unjust oppressor. In humility it has to be sensitive to the mystery of the action of God in the world. It should be open to the creative newness of the Spirit. Its horizon is God's own mission of universal reconciliation, when God will be with God's people. Then God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21: 4).⁵

Mar Thoma Church
Ernakulam

4. See, *Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing*, Statement of Indian Theological Association, Eleventh Meeting. pp. 14-19.

5. Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New: Mission in Dialogue*, p. 188.

Editorial

The Second Vatican Council made a shift of emphasis from the Universal Church to the Local Church. Every Local Church is really and fully the Church, not merely an incomplete fraction of the Church nor merely an administrative unit of the Universal Church. On the contrary, the Universal Church becomes actualized and takes concrete manifestation in every Local Church. No Local Church is under any other Local Church, but in communion with all other Local Churches. The heads of the Local Churches are the Bishops who are not delegates or ambassadors of the Pope, but the successors of the Apostles having their own proper authority in their Churches as 'vicars and ambassadors of Christ' (LG, no. 27). It means that every Local Church has its own legitimate autonomy.

But the legitimate autonomy does not mean separation or isolation from the other local Churches. The One Church is a Communion of Churches. Unless the different local Churches are in communion with one another, they will not become catholic and universal. Hence autonomy and communion must go hand in hand. The problem in the Catholic Church today is not lack of communion, but rather too much centralization and lack of legitimate autonomy in the local Churches. Several voices in the recent Special Synod of Bishops for Asia held in Rome raised this issue and asked for the legitimate freedom of the local Churches so that the Churches in Asia may become really and fully local. The Church's survival and growth in Asia in the third millennium depends on how the Churches in Asia become fully local by the process of inculturation. Unless the Churches in Asia become fully involved in the lives of the Asian people in dialogue with Asian socio-economic realities, cultures and religious traditions, Christianity has no future in Asia.

The emerging Globalization, free market system and the liberalization of economy and its aftermath of the domination of western culture and of a mono-cultural society pose a great threat to the autonomy and identity of the local people, their cultures and traditions. At this historical moment the task and duty of the Church is to be on the side of the local people, protect their

rights and what is valuable in their cultures and traditions and to stand for the primacy of the local. This Number of *Jeevadhara* deals with the question of the primacy of the local.

The article on the "Theology of the Local Church" (by Kuncheria Pathil) explains the idea of the Local Church, the process of becoming local, and the characteristics of the local Church in the background of the ecclesiological developments, especially of Vatican II in its rediscovery of the ecclesiology of communion. Mission of the local Church is defined by another article (by George Varghese) as "Building Communion of Communities". *Oikos* of God cannot be confined to the Church. The Church is only a sign and sacrament of this communion of communities. The mission of the Church today is to build up real and authentic human communities in each place, a communion of communities consisting of people of different religions, ideologies and cultures. Such communions are the anticipation and the first fruit of the Kingdom of God.

Building up of real local Churches in Asia was one of the major concerns of the Special Synod of Bishops for Asia which is just concluded in Rome. The main ideas, issues and concerns raised in the Synod by the numerous interventions are presented in another article (by Bishop Gali Bali who was one among the Indian delegates in the Synod). This Number also includes an article (by Sebastia Raj who was the chairperson of the Executive team of the Evaluation Committee of the CBCI) which summarizes the findings and recommendations of the CBCI Evaluation Report of 1995. It contains valuable orientations and guidelines for the future of the Churches in India.

Dharmaram College
Bangalore — 560 029

Kuncheria Pathil

Theology of the Local Church

Kuncheria Pathil

This paper begins with a historical introduction to the development of ecclesiology and passes on to Vatican II's teaching on the Church as communion. Then the theology of the Local Church is discussed where 'unity in diversity' is the predominant principle: "While preserving unity in essentials, let all members of the Church ... preserve a proper freedom in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in the variety of liturgical rites and even in theological elaborations of revealed truth." Lastly the role of the bishops and that of the episcopal conferences is discussed. Kuncheria Pathil is Professor of theology at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore.

In the Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology we notice a shift of emphasis from the institution of the Church to the mystery of the Church, from hierarchy to people, from papal primacy to episcopal collegiality and from the universal Church to the local Church. The Universal Church exists in reality in the local Church. The Local Church is the concrete realization and actualization of the Universal Church. The Universal Church is the Communion of the Local Churches. The self-understanding of the Church as Communion is the heart of the Council's ecclesiology. This communion has a vertical and a horizontal dimension, and this communion takes place first and foremost in the local community, especially in the Eucharistic assembly. This paper starts with a historical introduction on the development of ecclesiology, and then passes on to the teaching of Vatican II on the Church as Communion. With this historical and theological background the theology of the Local Church is discussed highlighting also the role of the Bishops and that of the Episcopal Conference. The paper is not meant to be comprehensive or exhaustive.

I

Development of Ecclesiology: a Historical Introduction

In the context of the Messianic expectation of the Old Testament and of the Apocalyptic climate of the period, Jesus

began to preach the coming of the Kingdom of God. Many people were captivated by the teachings, deeds and message of Jesus and became his disciples. The shattering experience of the tragic death of Jesus, the Messiah, and the totally new experience of the Resurrection and Pentecost made the disciples of Jesus into a closely knit community which proclaimed Jesus as "the Lord". This community of Jesus' disciples was called the "Church", *ekklesia*, the assembly of the People of God, and this community was marked by a great sense of mission. They communicated their faith-experience to their neighbours and to people in the neighbouring villages and towns, and thus "Christian" communities spread rapidly far and wide. The term "Church" (*ekklesia*) was used first for the Christian community in Jerusalem (Acts 8: 3; 11: 22; 12: 1, 5; 15: 3 etc.), and later for the Christian communities in other places (Acts 14: 23; 15: 41; 20: 17, 28; 9: 31 etc.). The term, therefore, meant both the local Christian assemblies as well as the whole assembly of all those who believed in Jesus, similar to the whole assembly of the people of God of the Old Testament (*Qahal* of Yahweh or *Qahal* of Israel).

The New Testament does not give us an explicit, systematic and well-articulated ecclesiology because its central theme was not the Church, but Jesus, his words and deeds, especially his message of the Kingdom of God. Among the Evangelists it is Matthew who gives us some details about the life of the early Christian community (Mt. 18: 1-20): The Church was a community of the "little ones", a fellowship of brothers and sisters, a community of equals, where Jesus alone was the Master. But Jesus himself came not "to be served but to serve". He came in search of sinners, "the lost sheep". The leadership in the community was for service. In matters of policies and decisions the community, not any individual leader, had the last word. It is Jesus' living and dynamic presence which makes the Church what it is. "When two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (Mt. 18: 20). Acts of the Apostles mentions the unifying elements of the early Christian community: the teaching of the Apostles, fellowship, the breaking of the bread and prayer (Acts 2: 42-47; 4: 32-35; 5: 2-15). These early Christian communities, their gatherings and celebrations were the signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed. The blind saw, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the lepers were healed, the possessed

were made free, the sinners, tax-collectors and prostitutes were converted; and all of them without any distinction of Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, formed into a community, the Kingdom community, and thus started a new movement, the Jesus Movement. It was a divine-human movement. It was God's gift to which the human community responded. The Church was therefore not a mere socio-religious movement.

This Jesus Movement was first confined to Israel, and the new community understood itself in terms of the fulfillment of the promises given to Israel. The Jewish Christian community situated itself within Judaism and emphasized its continuity with Israel. But when other groups like the Hellenists and the Gentiles joined the Church, naturally, there arose conflicts in the concept of the continuity with Judaism. The controversy over circumcision, the council of Jerusalem and the persecution of Stephen and other leaders of the Hellenistic Christians could be seen as a confrontation between Jewish Christians and Hellenistic/Gentile Christians. The decision of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) was to endorse a healthy pluralism in the Church that there could be different types of local Churches, marked by a rich diversity in life-style, customs, worship, discipline, patterns of ministry and administrative and organizational set-up, but all united in the fundamental Christian faith. Thus the local Churches in the Apostolic and post-Apostolic period were not carbon copies of the Jewish Church of Jerusalem, but were of different types conditioned by society, culture, and religious ethos of the people.¹ No central administration was there for all the Churches, although the Churches had a strong sense of unity and communion. Local/Regional Churches had their legitimate autonomy and autocephaly

1. See James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1977). The author identifies four different types of Churches in the New Testament, Jewish, Hellenistic/Gentile, Apocalyptic and Catholic. But all of them were united in the central Christological faith that Jesus is God and Saviour, fully God and fully Man, which was the touchstone and test of orthodoxy, however different may be the formulations of this confession. The moment this central Christological faith was challenged or diluted some of these types of Christian communities were condemned as heretical as in the case of the *Ebionites* (Jewish Christians who denied the full divinity of Christ and held an adoptionist Christology) and the *Gnostics* [Hellenistic Christians who denied the full humanity of Christ and held a docetist Christology].

within the fundamental unity of Christian faith, enshrined in the common Scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition. Whenever there arose problems and conflicts among the Churches in matters of faith and practice, leaders of the different Churches used to meet in synods and councils to clarify the faith and to take common decisions. The early Churches thus had a synodal and conciliar structure. The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church was a Communion of different local Churches.

In the context of increasing heresies and schisms and of the urgent need for unity among the early Churches the post-Apostolic and Patristic periods saw certain homogeneous developments in the formation of ecclesial structures, tendencies for uniformity in doctrines and practices and movements for centralization both within and among the Churches. The earliest Churches had a plurality of ministerial patterns and organizational set-up. But by the beginning of the second century we see a uniform development in the forms and patterns of the ordained ministry in all Churches. The threefold ministry of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons gradually became normative in all the Churches until the period of Protestant Reformation. With the conversion of emperor Constantine Christianity became the official religion of the whole empire. Political power was used to suppress all heresies and schisms, and uniformity in doctrines and practices was insisted upon by the imperial councils of the 4th and 5th centuries also in view of the stability of the empire. The Church gradually adopted the political and imperial model. Bishops became monarchs who began to rule the territorial units with jurisdiction or the power of governing. Local Churches were clubbed together under Metropolitan Sees, and later under the five Patriarchates of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Constantinople. In the first millennium the Universal Church was thus governed by the Pentarchy, i. e. by the five Patriarchs who were all equals, though the Patriarch of Rome was recognized as the first among equals. The communion among the Patriarchal Churches was expressed and maintained by the exchange of "synodal letters", by mutual visits and intercommunion. The election of the Bishops had to be confirmed by the Patriarch, and that of the Patriarch by the other Patriarchs.

The total centralization of the Church under the supreme authority of the Roman Papacy which happened in the second

millennium destroyed the rich diversity of the local Churches and their legitimate autonomy. Indeed, from the third century onward we see that the special place and role of the Bishop of Rome in the communion of the Churches was widely acknowledged, though any exercise of universal jurisdiction, in the strict sense, by the Bishop of Rome, both in theory and practice, may be found only in the second millennium. With the Gregorian Reform of the 11th century the Papal authority was formulated and implemented, and it was given legal basis with the codification of the Canon Law in the 12th century. The 13th century Scholastic theologians consolidated this process of centralization by articulating a Papal-Monarchical-Pyramidal Ecclesiology. The centrifugal forces of the 16th century Reformation were checked by the Counter Reformation of the council of Trent which totally rejected the Protestant ideas and their demand for reforms. The democratic, secular, liberal and revolutionary movements of the 19th century were encountered by the First Vatican Council's dogmatic definitions of Papal Primacy and Infallibility, which was the culmination of a historical process of centralization of the Church.

This historical development of over-centralization of the Church had to pay a heavy price. The rich diversity among the various Churches was suspected and at times condemned with the tragic consequence of division in the Church. The Christological debate among the theological schools of the 5th century and the insistence on uniformity in doctrinal and theological formulations led to the separation of the Oriental Orthodox Churches of the East. Undue interference of the Bishop of Rome into the affairs of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople and its allies caused the division between the Western Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox in the 11th century. Unwillingness to self-criticism and reform on the one hand, and hasty condemnation of the Reformers' ideas on the other, were the root causes of the division between Catholics and Protestants. The divisions among the Churches and their subsequent life in separation, isolation and opposition, naturally led to certain fragmentation, distortion and exaggeration in all the Churches without exception. The centralization of the Church by the assertion of the primacy of the Roman Church over the other Churches practically destroyed the legitimate autonomy and identity of the local Churches, and the

concept of the Church as the Communion of different local / regional / national / individual Churches fell into oblivion.

II

Vatican II and Rediscovery of the Ecclesiology of Communion

The Church is a mystery, God's plan, gift and action which takes concrete historical form in our particular socio-cultural and political world. God assumes in the incarnation of His Son and by the power of the work of the Spirit our particular flesh and socio-cultural histories and creates community. But creating community in the Church and in the world are closely related. It is the same God and His Spirit who is working in the Church and in the world. The Church is called to be the sign and sacrament of humanity's communion with God and of the unity of the whole humankind.² The Church changes the world and the world changes the Church. The Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World spoke about the radical changes in the world today and called for an explicit and conscious restatement of the self-understanding of the Church in the actual situation of today.³ The shift from the imperial, feudalistic, colonialistic and dictatorial regimes and such social systems to a democratic, egalitarian and free society requires new structures and patterns of administration and new ways of exercising leadership in the Church. Emergence of the newly independent nations and the new consciousness of their cultural and political identity calls for the inculturation and the legitimate autonomy of the local Churches. The new pluralism, religious, ecclesial, doctrinal and theological, offers a new concept of unity in plurality, and invites different Churches and religions for common fellowship. The new theological shift from the Church-centred mission to the Kingdom-centred mission calls for a new self-understanding of the Church. Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II is a timely response to all these challenges.

The 1985 Roman Synod of Bishops held on the twentieth anniversary of the closing of Vatican II stated that "the ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of

2. LG, No. 1.

3. GS, No. 4-5.

the Council's documents".⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, chapter one, presents the Church primarily as a *mystery*, as a divine reality, as *koinonia* or communion which means participation in the life of God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. The Church has thus its origin in the Trinity. It was in the plan of God the Father and realized in time in the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is God's sacrament and instrument for the salvation of the whole human-kind, for the realization of the Kingdom of God. As in the mystery of Christ divine and human natures are united in the one person, so is the mystery of the Church where Christ and the Church are united that the Church becomes the Body of Christ, the people of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the bride of Christ. The mystery nature of the Church means that it cannot be reduced to visible institutions, structures, rituals and dogmas. The mystery of the Church transcends all these external manifestations and expressions to such an extent that it can exist even outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church.

The vertical dimension of the *koinonia* leads to its horizontal dimension. Union of believers with God makes possible the horizontal unity among them. The *koinonia* which is the bond of union between God and believers in Christ establishes a new relationship among the believers themselves. Hence the Church is also called *koinonia* because of the fellowship its members have in the life of the Spirit. But this *koinonia* is a dynamic reality both in its vertical and horizontal aspect. "Our communion with the Triune God and with one another develops throughout history and will never be completely realized until we are ultimately united with God in glory".⁵ After presenting the mystery of the Church as *koinonia* in its vertical dimension, the rest of the *Lumen Gentium* describes the different aspects of the Church in its horizontal aspect of *koinonia*. The Church is primarily *ekklesia*, the gathering or assembly of the people of God, the fulfillment of the people of God of the Old Testament. They are a priestly, prophetic and kingly people who have equal dignity and status irrespective of hierarchy or laity. No particular office, function

4. Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 1985, *A Messaga to the People of God*

5. "The Church: Local and Universal, A Study Document Commissioned and Received by the Joint-Working Group, 1990". *Information Service*, No. 74, 1990 / III, p. 76.

or charism in the Church shall extol anyone.⁶ The Risen Lord and the Spirit is residing in the whole community of Christians as a whole and their sense of faith (*sensus fidei, sensus fidelium*) is the basis for the infallibility of the Church.⁷ The Council did not consider this *koinonia* in the Church in any exclusive sense. In its broader sense, the *koinonia* extends to the whole humanity. The whole humanity is the People of God, though in different levels or grades.⁸ This inclusive concept of the People of God has inspired contemporary theology to seriously examine the relationship of the Catholic Church to other Churches, other religions and to the entire humanity. As a result, a new vision of ecumenism and a new theology of religions are on the horizon.

Lumen Gentium, chapter three, deals with the structures of this *koinonia*. The Council here makes a shift from the Papal-Monarchical-Pyramidal model to the Collegial, Conciliar, Synodal and Communion model, of course, not rejecting the unique role of the Papacy in the whole Communion of Churches. Conciliar practice was the tradition of the early Churches, right from the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) down to the great Councils of the 4th and 5th centuries. The Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 AD) stipulated that Provincial Synods should be held twice a year, and thus in the East the synodal system became a constitutive part of the functioning of the Church. As we had already pointed out, it was the development of the centralization and the emergence of a monarchical papacy which eliminated the synodal and conciliar structures built up by the early Churches. The Council teaches that the College of Bishops has supreme, universal and immediate authority in the Church in teaching matters of faith and morals.⁹ But the authority of the College of Bishops does not contradict the authority of the Pope, as the Pope is a member of the College, and is in fact the head of the College. It means that the Pope and the Bishops should function in the Church in close collaboration and communion as the members of One Body, and they in turn have to function in close communion with the entire *koinonia* of the Church. The Council also instituted the permanent Roman Synod, National Episcopal Conferences, Diocesan Pastoral Councils etc. as new structures of communion. But the Council could not, perhaps, fully pull down the old pyramidal structures

6. LG. No. 9-12.

7. LG. No. 12.

8. LG, Nos. 13-16..

9. LG, No. 22.

and the monarchical and dictatorial ways of functioning in the Church.

The central idea of the ecclesiology of the Council, as we have pointed out, is that the Church is a communion. This communion has a vertical and a horizontal dimension, and this communion exists in different levels and grades. The Universal Church is a communion of the different local/particular/individual churches. In the pre-Vatican period, the emphasis was on the Universal Church, its unity and uniformity under the Papacy at the expense of the diversity of the Churches and their autonomy. Vatican II shifted the emphasis to the local churches, their rich diversity and their legitimate autonomy. As successors of the Apostles, the Bishops are indeed co-responsible for all the churches. But as heads of local churches, they have their own authority in their Churches as "vicars and ambassadors of Christ".¹⁰ The authority of the Bishops does not derive from the Pope but from the Apostles by the act of Episcopal consecration by which they become successors of the Apostles.¹¹ Bishop is the principle of unity of the local church. No local church is under any other local church, but in communion with all other local churches.

In the communion of the churches, what is the place and status of the local church and the basis of its authority? What is the authority of the local Bishop and that of a Bishops' Conference? We shall deal with these questions briefly, without entering into a discussion on the Code of Canons on this question.

III

Theology of the Local Church

The Church at its origin was a local Church, the Church in Jerusalem. Several other local churches were born due to the missionary activity of this Church in Jerusalem. Still we cannot say that the local Church is the first and then the Universal Church. The local church is the concrete manifestation and realization of the Universal Church. The local Church is not a part or administrative unit of the Universal Church. The local Church is fully the Church. It is the microcosm of the whole Church. The Universal Church is fully present in every local church. Local Churches naturally become diversified due to the

10. LG, No. 27,

11. LG, No. 20-21.

differences in their socio-cultural contexts. The various local churches have legitimate autonomy and they have every right to have their own traditions, liturgies, disciplines, and their own theological and spiritual heritage. But all the Local Churches are united in the same communion of faith and sacraments, and their unity is expressed in the communion of Churches and their Bishops who are members of one episcopal body with the Roman Pontiff as its head. The different local churches have equal dignity and equal responsibility for the Universal Church. A local church becomes Catholic and Universal by its communion with all other local churches. Bishop is the head of a local/particular Church, and the Bishops of local/regional/national Churches have a common pastoral and teaching authority which they exercise in the Episcopal Conference which is a new structural development in the Church. I shall try to clarify some of these points.

What is a Local Church?

The term "Local Church" has a very general and ambiguous meaning. It could mean a Basic Christian Community, a Eucharistic assembly, a parish, a diocese, an Individual Church (Rite), a regional Church, a national Church etc. The Vatican II documents use the term "local Church" with these different meanings. The Codes of Canon Law do not use the term "local church".

By Local Church is meant "the historical actualization of the mystery of God in Christ"¹² in a particular people, whether it be a cultural, linguistic, social, geographical, or national group. So the local church is not an exclusively geographical notion. In the same geographical locus many local Churches can co-exist, provided there are many socio-cultural and historical groups of people in the same place who had responded in their own way to the Gospel. The local church is a portion of the people of God where the mystery of the Church becomes actualized and is in the process of its full realization. It is a group of people who have responded to the Gospel from their own situation and formed a community by the power of the Word and the Spirit. Thus in the genesis of a Church there is an interplay of divine and human action, a divine and a human element. The Church is God's gift and our task:

12. *Theses on the local Church*, FABC Papers. No. 60, p. 12.

The society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ, the visible community and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities, but as one complex reality which comes together from a human and divine element.¹³

A community is a group of people held together in a fellowship on the basis of common experience, meanings, values and commitment. The essential element in the local church is the common sharing in the Apostolic Christ-experience through the proclamation of the Word and the Sacraments and the experience of the power of the Spirit which unifies them. What are the visible criteria and constitutive elements of a local church? Could any group of people who calls itself a Church be a local church? This is an ecumenical question. There are many Christian sects today who call themselves as local Churches. All the mainline Christian Churches agree on the definition of a local Church "as a community of baptized believers in which the Word of God is preached, the apostolic faith confessed, the sacraments are celebrated, the redemptive work of Christ for the world is witnessed to, and a ministry of episcopate exercised by Bishops or other ministers is serving the community".¹⁴ Similarly, the Third Plenary Assembly of the FABC spoke of several "constants in the being and life of the Church" and wherever these basic elements are realized, the one and universal Church is realized there in all its distinctive fullness.¹⁵ Such a local church is truly and fully the Church. It is not just a part or administrative unit of the universal Church. In the local church the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is truly and fully present and active.¹⁶ Every local church is wholly the Church, though it is not the whole Church.

How does a Church Become Local?

Local churches are not mere extensions of another local church. Being and becoming of the local church is a process

13. LG. No. 8.

14. "The Church: Local and Universal! — A Study Document Commissioned and Received by the Joint Working Group", *Information Service*, No. 74, 1990 [III], p. 78.

15. Statement of the Third Plenary Assembly of the FABC. Bangkok, 1983, No. 7. 16. CD. No. 11; LG, No. 26.

which may be called *ecclesiogenesis*. This ecclesiogenesis in a given time, place, culture and people is often known as "inculturation" of the Church. And Inculturation is not simply the external adaptation of certain aspects of the life and practice of the Church by taking some elements from a new culture which it encounters. Inculturation is the result of a genuine encounter of Christ and the Gospel with the soul or spirit of a culture of a people. It is a local realization of the mystery of the Church.

Culture is not a ready-made or finished product. Every culture is in a process of becoming in continuous encounter with the present realities and the cultures of other peoples. Meeting of two cultures and the process of give-and-take between them may be called "interculturalization". The process of inculturation is really a process of interculturalization too.¹⁷ For the Gospel or the Christian Faith does not exist first in an abstract form and then to be inculturated in every culture. On the contrary, the original Gospel and the original Christian faith/Church itself was embodied in a socio-cultural form. Every Apostle/missionary/believer has received the faith in a particular historical and socio-cultural form and as a missionary he carries this inculturated faith to other peoples. It is the people who have to respond to the Gospel in their own way and receive the faith in their own historical and socio-cultural form. Hence inculturation is really an interculturalization, meeting of Christianity in a particular socio-cultural form with the culture of a new people. Such an interculturalization process has two consequences: On the one hand, the culture which encounters and receives the Gospel/Christian faith will be purified from its human deficiencies, distortions and sinfulness and will be transformed. On the other hand, the Gospel and the Christian faith itself will be enriched, and its Catholicity will be enhanced:

Each culture not only provides us with a new approach to the human, but also opens up new avenues for the understanding of the Gospel and its riches. When the Gospel encounters the tradition, experience and culture of a people, its hitherto undiscovered virtualities will surface; riches and meanings as yet hidden will emerge into the light. That is why it is so

17. See, Raimon Panikkar, "Indic Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism from the Perspective of Interculturalization", Kuncheria Pathil [ed.], *Religious Pluralism; An Indian Christian Perspective*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1991, pp, 252-299.

important to reinterpret the Gospel through the cultural resources of every people; this reinterpretation truly enriches the Christian Tradition. Seen in this light, the local church itself may be viewed as a fresh and creative reactualization and reinterpretation of the Gospel and faith. Such reinterpretation will not be a break with the Tradition, but will be in organic continuity with it, in as much as the past will be repossessed and reactivated in the present experience of a local Church.¹⁸

Inculturation shall not be primarily seen as a technical work of experts and theologians. Nor should it be exclusively in terms of classical cultures or cultures of the dominant groups. Inculturation is to be seen rather as a natural and spontaneous activity of the whole Christian community which receives the Gospel and lives it in their own social, cultural and religious context. Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conference has repeatedly called the Asian Churches for inculturation and for building up authentic local Churches by a triple dialogue with or immersion into Asia's poor, Asia's rich cultures and religious traditions, in other words, a dialogue with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own.¹⁹ It is only by such deeper involvement of the Church in the lives of the people, authentic and fully inculturated local churches will emerge.

Whether Indian Churches are really, fully and authentically local is a question raised by many.²⁰ Many people say that we have only *Churches in India*, not *Indian Churches*. This seems to be true both in the case of Catholic and other Churches. There are Latin Catholics, Syrian Catholics, Jacobites, American Baptists, German Lutherans, American Methodists etc. in India. All these Churches, originated abroad in particular historical and socio-cultural contexts, were simply transplanted in our country without much inculturation. The ancient Church of St. Thomas in India may be an exception, though during the later periods its "local"

18. *Theses on the Local Church*, FABC Papers, No. 60, pp. 20-21.

19. FABC I, Nos. 12, 1974, "General Assembly Statement", *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Rosales and Arevalo [Eds.], Manila: Claretian Publication, 1994

20. "The Ecclesiology at Work in the Indian Church Today", in Gerwin van Leeuwen [ed.], *Searching for An Indian Ecclesiology*, Bangalore: ATC, 1984, p. 196.

character was tampered with by its Chaldean, Roman and Antiochean connections. How should we make the historical Churches in India fully local and authentically Indian? A total break with the past may not be the right thing. What we need seems to be an organic growth in encounter with the living realities of India and the Indian experience of Christ.

Diversity and Unity of the Local Churches

"Unity in Diversity" is the great anthropological, philosophical and theological principle. Unity is promoted not by imposing uniformity, but by acknowledging, respecting and promoting healthy diversity. Unity of human race is promoted by respecting the peculiarities of different peoples and cultures.²¹ Similarly the unity of the Church is promoted by respecting and accepting the diversities of the local churches which have their origin in their own particular historical, socio-cultural, political and religious context. Vatican II emphasized this rich diversity of the local churches while underlining their unity:

By divine providence it has come about that various Churches established in diverse places by the Apostles and their successors have in the course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage... Such a harmonious variety of local churches is all the more splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided church.²²

Hence also within the ecclesial communion particular churches hold a rightful place and enjoy their own traditions without prejudice to the primacy of the Chair of Peter: its office is to preside over the entire gathering of charity to safeguard legitimate differences, while yet careful that such distinctiveness serve rather than impair unity...²³

While preserving unity in essentials, let all members of the church, according to the office entrusted to each, preserve a proper freedom in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in the variety of liturgical rites and even in the theological elaborations of revealed truth. In all things let

21. GS, No. 54.

22. LG, No. 23.

23. LG, No. 23; also OE, Nos. 2-4.

charity be exercised. If the faithful are true to this course of action, they will be giving ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity of the Church, and, at the same time, to her Apostolicity.²⁴

In our historical introduction we had already mentioned the diversity of the early churches and pointed out how that healthy diversity was to a great extent suppressed during the second millennium owing to the process of centralization of the church. Today once again we have to emphasize the diversity of the local churches and their unity in diversity. Unity of the church shall not be sought in uniformity among the local churches, but in the unity of faith and in the sacramental communion expressed in the communion of the bishops to be presided by the Roman Pontiff. Local churches in India are indeed diverse both historically and culturally. And there could be further possibilities for diversity even within each Catholic Individual Church. The local churches of the Latin Church in Tamil Nadu, Bihar and North East need not be patterned in the same way. The liturgical controversy in the Syro-Malabar church may be an indication of further diversification of the same Individual Church, may be, in the context of its new missionary prospects and challenges.

Autonomy and Communion

In the process of ecclesiogenesis of the local church it is the local community which responds to the gift of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit from its own particular cultural context. In this process the local community shall enjoy its own legitimate autonomy, and other local churches shall not dictate or control this process, though they may play the role of a midwife. Vatican II has endorsed this legitimate autonomy of the local church while speaking about the Eastern Churches in view of promoting ecumenism:

From the earliest times, moreover, the Eastern Churches followed their own disciplines, sanctioned by the holy Fathers, by synods, even ecumenical councils. Far from being an obstacle to the church's unity, such diversity of customs and observances only adds to her comeliness, and contributes greatly to carrying out her mission, as has already been recalled. To remove any shadow of doubt, then, this sacred

24. UR. No. 4.

Synod solemnly declares that the churches of the East, while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole church, have the power to govern themselves according to their own disciplines, since these are better suited to the temperament of their faithful and better adapted to foster the good of souls. Although it has not always been honoured, the strict observance of this traditional principle is among the prerequisites for any restoration of unity.²⁵

The Theological Advisory Commission of the FABC explains this legitimate autonomy of the local churches as follows:

By living within their particular context according to the "sense of faith aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth" (LG. 12), the faithful will learn to express their faith not only in fidelity to the Apostolic Tradition, but also in response to their cultural situations. This response is the responsibility of the whole community which discerns God's Word and Spirit in its culture and history. This responsibility is unique; it cannot be delegated or substituted. Since the context of the local church differs from another, every local church enjoys a legitimate autonomy, while maintaining the universal communion, to shape creatively its own life, structures and fulfill its God-given mission in its cultural environment.²⁶

The local churches have to exercise this autonomy especially in the areas of inculturation of the liturgy, catechesis, spirituality, theology and styles of religious life for which they alone are competent. No local church can be supplied with ready-made liturgies, spirituality and theology from outside.

Autonomy, however, does not mean separation or isolation from other local churches. The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is the communion of churches. Unless the local churches are in communion with one another they will not be one, holy catholic and apostolic. This communion is maintained and expressed in the communion among the Bishops who are the heads of the local churches. Mutual solicitude, support, and recognition, regular communication by exchange of synodal decisions and confessions of faith, intercommunion in the sacraments, collaboration in common programmes and projects, hospitality, reciprocal

25. UR, No. 16; Also, OE, No. 5.

26. *Theses on the Local Church*, FABC Papers, No. 60, p. 28.

Editorial

Catholic theology and practice need a great deal of self-examination regarding the attitude towards other religions. The traditional approach was rather negative, extending between Exclusivism which said that we are right and everyone else wrong and Inclusivism which mitigated the position a bit by recognizing truth in other religions as well, but held that what was true and valid in them was already included in our faith so that we did not have any need to learn from them. A new bold step was taken by Vatican II, which looking for what unites all human beings found that people looked to the world religions for answers to the basic existential questions regarding origin, subsistence, future and the like. It recognized the unique contribution of each religion in discovering the ultimate meaning and scope of faith, God's free gift to all his children. But this positive lead of Vatican II was not followed up in the post-Vatican period. The official position, exposed in various documents from Rome, is still within inclusivism, namely that other religions had only a ray of the fullness of light which the Catholic Church alone possessed. Some Western theologians obviously piqued by the fact that there are more missionaries from the East going to the West than Christian missionariss going to the East, are saying that each religion is valid and salvific for its members. The implied plea is: leave Europe and America to Christians, the Middle East to Muslims and Jews and the Far East to Hindus and Buddhists! So dialogue between religions is practically at a dead-end.

But humanity itself is entering a new Axial Period bringing religions closer to each other healing the division created by the first Axial Period between 900 and 200 BCE which had pitted religions against each other according to the differing views of the nature of the Deity. So there is urgent need to get interreligious dialogue back on its track. This issue of *Jeevadhara* is dedicated to a discussion of various issues connected with the scope and conditions of religious dialogue today.

Dialogue itself is an ambiguous term that implies the confrontation or encounter between protagonists of two radically divergent religious traditions. If it is not a new technique for the conversion of the other, it is the pastime of an elite group engaging in public diplomacy replacing the Gospel message with a watered down moral doctrine skirting all controversial issues. If all religions are integral to the one divine economy of salvation, the common heritage of all in the one religious history of humanity, putting religions in opposing camps does not seem to have much relevance. Restructuring and empowering dialogue in the new context is the topic of Fr. George Koovackal's article.

The scope of the Christian Church as well as of other religions is giving people an alternative vision to that offered by culture. We are bombarded by facts and words; this information glut makes it difficult for people to see what really counts in life. Fr. James Madathikandam shows how people of different faiths can come together to obtain a deeper understanding of life itself. Fr. Thomas Cheeran shows how this coming together of religions in true fellowship is vital especially at a moment of crisis. Fr. Baby Shepherd, Director, Chavara Cultural Centre shows how dialogue deepens by fighting together against injustice.

Christians have a deeper interest in dialogue than people of other faiths. While Hinduism emphasizes the personal realization of God, Buddhism the emptiness of all phenomenal things, Islam the enforcement of God's Law in God's world, Christians have a social and historical emphasis and want to show how all religious traditions are involved in a common plan to transform this world into God's Kingdom. So Christians have taken this lead in approaching people of other faiths and inquiring how God has spoken in their historical traditions in order to communicate to them the 'Good News' that in the entry of the Son of God as Jesus of Nazareth into human history, the pilgrimage of salvation is radically changed for all. Fr. Kalliath's article explains this Christian leadership in dialogue.

Christianity from its very origin was dialogical. It started out in dialogue with Greek religions and culture which radically transformed its cultural outlook from the anthropomorphic perspective of Judaism to the highly philosophical view of Plato and Aristotle. It entered into dialogue with the Mystery cults of the

Middle East, the Emperor worship of the Romans and other religious movements of the early centuries, taking what was true and valid in them and surviving them all in the flow of history. Dr. Albert Nambiaparambil examines this Christian interest in dialogue and its various dimensions. Dialogue with Judaism had a checkered history, with a good deal of anti-semitism thrown in between. But the dialogue still continues. Dr. John W. Healey, director of Fordham University's Archbishop Hughes Institute of Religion and Culture discusses this Jewish-Christian Dialogue as a paradigm for dialogue with other religions as well.

The positive and dialogical approach to other religions has radically altered Christian theology itself. Instead of considering them all as enemies and adversaries, who had first to be proved wrong in order to prove the truth of Christianity, today the bottom-line is that affirming the truth and validity of other religions is an added confirmation of Christianity itself. This is the scope of my article on "the Christian Approach to Religious Pluralism".

CMI Dharmaniketan
Calcutta — 34

John B. Chethimattam

Restructuring the Dialogue Ministry

George Koovackal

Today interreligious dialogue has a bad name. At best it is considered the pastime of an elite which has nothing else to do. It is a form of public relations, a type of interreligious diplomacy, replacing the Gospel Message with a watered down version of simple humanistic do-good-ism, carefully avoiding all controversial issues. Very few are actually interested in it, and they do so only because Church leaders encourage it. So many naturally ask what is the future of dialogue?

In the perception of people of other faiths Christian attempts at dialogue only mask the old intent of proselytism, a new trap employed by the old "trappers". Though some of them come for dialogue for politeness sake, the religious leaders who need dialogue most to get rid of their prejudices, keep away from it.

The actual results of such dialogue are quite meagre no much more than some superficial socializing. The methods and procedures of dialogue introduced some twenty five years or even half a century ago still continue. Fundamentally it is comparative religion on a very superficial level. On any given issue disparate passages taken out of context from various scriptures are read, without seriously considering their differing scopes and meanings for the respective religionists. Religious terms that sound similar like dharma, morality, justice and spirituality are treated on an equal level without carefully examining the exact meaning of each term, the cluster of concepts within which alone each term is properly intelligible, and the exact meaning each word has within the total religious perspective and world vision of each religion. In praying together in such interreligious gatherings each one prays to his own Deity expressing his own sectarian ideas for the benefit of those who listen, or keep away from all religious ideas restricting oneself to a neutral territory.

The Need for Dialogue Continues: But promoting inter-religious dialogue in all its forms has become the most urgent

need of the hour. Religions have been politicized and even criminalized, since corrupt politicians have succeeded in hijacking religious sentiments to suit their own selfish interests. Religion touches people at their deepest core, and any perceived threat to their religious traditions and worship forms arouses them to violent action. Especially when people have no deep spiritual experience nor proper rational understanding of the truths involved, there is great scope for fundamentalism, which is absolutization of the trivial. A place or rite or a text assumes fundamental importance and is often identified with religion itself. There arises a deep suspicion of those who are in any way perceived to be against any of these things. What unites people of different faiths, belief in the one ultimate Reality and ground of being, and the basic moral values shared by all, is often set aside and people fight for things and values that are merely on the fringes of one's religious life. Only through open dialogue and frank sharing of one's beliefs with people of other faiths can prejudices be overcome and each item in a religious tradition given its proper value and priority.

Dialogue has to be Problem-centred: Human beings are not pure spirits but embodied. What affects our body like hunger and thirst, lack of a roof over one's head, need of acceptance by people in the midst of whom we find ourselves and the like touch us deeply. When one is judged to have terminal cancer, or one is thrown out by force from where one was living, or discriminated against on account of race, colour or religion, something deep inside him or her is affected, and existence itself questioned. Human problems, however, cannot be solved merely on the surface, but has to be approached from the deepest centre. It is here that religions have to make their influence felt and come together to alleviate the sufferings of those who are affected. When a house catches fire in the middle of the night and people are caught unawares in their sleep one does not ask whether the victims are Hindus or Muslims.

There are three basic problems that affect all humanity, bafflement at the phenomena of nature, presence of evil in the world created by a good and all-powerful God, and the suffering of the innocent. According as one or other of these problems formed the focus, religions and philosophies also were different. Greek philosophy in general and the religions which adopted it, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam were centred in the idea

of a Supreme Being; the Persians and the Middle Eastern people in general emphasized the problem of evil and saw the world itself as an arena of a fight between God and the Devil which is the personification of evil. For the Indian religions, on the other hand, human suffering was the focus of attention. Bearing in mind this difference of foci is important to understand the distinctive emphases of religions too.

Culture the Broader Context of Dialogue

But the unifying factor of dialogue among religions in a given national tradition is culture. Formed by the sum total of symbols and values handed down from generation to generation, culture forms the aesthetic continuum in which different religions can attain a certain symbiosis. There is a traditional way in which all Indians face their life problems which is somewhat different from that of the Greeks, of the Africans, and of the Western people in general. Even the most profound religious insights are expressed in terms of culture. For India this framework of culture is defined by the *Pancaśīla*, the fivefold outlook of truthfulness, non-grabbing of goods, non-stealing, purity of life and non-violence. As Pandit Jawharlal Nehru stated in his 1958 Azad lecture at Santiniketan, even the most ambitious economic planning should be characterized by *ahimsa* or non-violence. This negative term of avoiding violence implies all the positive virtues of charity, compassion, concern for the other and love. India is not worried by the great variety of beliefs, customs and forms of religious worship brought to it by various peoples, religions and traditions, provided they are all unified by the culture of *pancasila*.

Celebrations: Collective Expressions of Religious Sentiment

Ironically most clashes between religious groups occur on the occasion of religious festivities and public demonstrations such as processions. In fact, however, the sentiments of joy, thanksgiving, devotion, repentance and penance should rather bring people together. Often the politicization of these events by outside agencies turn these into occasions of rivalry, confrontation and conflict. The greatest obstacle to dialogue is the indifference of the ignorant and arrogant religious leaders found in all religions. Hence those who are to enter into the ministry of dialogue have to be adequately trained for it. One useful

method would be conducting exposure programmes through which the need and relevance of dialogue will be perceived and realized in one's own personal life. An annual gathering of those interested and actually engaged in this ministry will certainly help to acquaint every one of the actual situation and keep the interest alive.

It would be good to have a small group of researchers to conduct special studies in places where communal clashes and riots have taken place. It is important to bring to light the causes, consequences and other important factors of the oft repeated communal fights which are often ignored or hushed up by the secular media.

Emerging Theological Trends in Dialogue

The most important part of dialogue is the doctrinal foundations from which each of the partners is formulating his faith and calling for moral, psychological and social lines of action. Perhaps it is most difficult to reach agreement at this level. Different religions have radically different philosophical problematics and methodologies. Greeks in their questioning of the phenomena of nature sought for the 'what' of things or their hidden nature and dealt with notions such as being, truth and goodness. So religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam which adopted Greek philosophy as a tool for explaining their religious faith postulated a Supreme Being, the Form of all forms. Even for Hebrews who viewed God as the one "who" created heaven and earth He was so transcendent that even His name could not be pronounced by mortal human beings. Indian religions sought the origin, sustenance and final dissolution of things and defined that maternal womb of all things as pure contentless consciousness, pure emptiness! The Chinese sought the authentic nature of things. No synthesis can be made of these different philosophical perspectives. What one has to do is to devise strategies to make these differing philosophies relevant to each other. Religious life itself is divided into different phases. The philosophical, and mythological stage is rather an external and preliminary one. In fact, this was very much conditioned by the political and sociological currents. Thus those religions which were born under the domination of foreign cultures like Judaism, Christianity and Islam had for the sake of survival to assume the

form of a 'secret wisdom' intelligible only to the initiates. They had also to be militant in order to impose on every one their religious philosophy which alone would be the true one. Similarly religions which were patronised by kings and emperors tended to be tools for their political expansion. Thus India under the rule of even the most benevolent Buddhist rulers was a Buddhist country for almost a thousand years. Once the Hindu kings replaced them Buddhism was almost wiped out of its birth place in the 5th to the 8th centuries.

But the properly religious stage is that of religious experience. Though it is not possible to find points of agreement at the external level, at the level of experience there can always be full agreement and perfect harmony. Therefore without confining ourselves to doctrines and belief-systems, we should give greater importance to a comparative study of the lives and teachings of great mystics and spiritual personalities of all religions. This will give us a new paradigm, a sound basis for effective inter-religious dialogue.

Religion Through Human Development

James Madathikandam

It was a Sunday and an inter-religious meeting was going on and it was immediately after the nuclear tests at Pokhran. So the discussion was focused on the socio-economic and political impact of the Pokhran nuclear tests. It was led by Sri Satyajit Rajan, District Collector of Kottayam, Sri M. C. Joseph, retired Chief Judicial Magistrate and Sri T. C. Mathew, Editor of Deepika, Kottayam. If one examines the monthly programmes of Upasana, the Centre for Religio-cultural integration in Thodupuzha, one may wonder what all these have to do with religion at all. Inter-religious meetings are generally held on Sundays around 5 p.m. One Sunday the topic was the analysis of the Budget 1998-99 of the Indian Federal Government, and it was led by Professors George James and Muralee Vallabhan. Another Sunday we had an interview with the teachers of a school from which not a single student passed the SSLC examinations! The relevance of these disparate topics of human interest is that only through the development of the different aspects of human life, religion can be of meaning for people.

Upasana is a religio-cultural centre which stands for the integration of the religious, cultural, artistic, literary, scientific and spiritual enlightenment of all people. It nurtures the feeling of brotherhood and harmony among different religions, castes and classes. Though religions deal with God and salvation, it is a human phenomenon. Even in the New Testament, salvation is viewed in different ways. For Matthew it is the fulfilment of God's promises made to humanity at the Fall of the first parents and to Israel in particular. For Mark it is the realization of the secret mission of the Messiah in the Incarnation. John sees salvation in the knowledge of God and of eternal Word who is the Son of God. Luke, a Gentile convert of the sub-Apostolic age preaching the Gospel to a gentile world has the most humanistic view of salvation as the all-round well being of humans, relational, cultural,

spiritual and economic. His vision of religion is most appropriate to our era of mutual communication, dialogue and recognition of goodness and truth wherever they be found.

An effective inter-religious activity should have a methodology and infrastructure reaching out to all sections of the community, students and non-students, the employed as well as unemployed and should embrace all needs psychological, social and economic. So the programme may contain a one day personality development camp for children, a discussion of food and behaviour, or an exposition of the scientific steps for the development of memory and mental power. An interfaith-retreat may help the spiritual growth of all believers irrespective of their religious affiliation. An inter-faith prayer meeting every month if not every week gives an opportunity for all God's children to worship together. The common discussions may have a great variety of topics, like Relevance of Ramyana for our Times, Mother Theresa, her life and message, Vedanta as a science of living, Influence of the Bible in the life of the Common man, the Religious Perspective of the Qur'an and Meditation as a Means of Healing.

Celebration: the Core of Religious Living: What brings energy and inspiration to religion is celebration. This is true on an interreligious plane also. Besides the festivities specific to each religion, the sentiments of which can be shared by people of other faiths, there are important days celebrated by all, like Day of National Independence, the Republic Day on January 26, Gandhi Jayanti on October 2, Onam, the feast of thanksgiving, Christmas and Deevali. These can be occasions to help each other to learn and appreciate the basic values common to all religions, to realize the values that may have been neglected by one's own tradition, but are being emphasized by other traditions, promote interreligious harmony and peace, enhance the quality of life for all human beings and work together to build up a more just and humane society.

The concern for the overall well-being of humans often requires more specialized services for different sections of society such as children, youth and women, legal aid forum to conscientize people about their legal rights and defend those who cannot afford the high cost of hiring a lawyer. In this age of heightened marketing of consumer goods a consumer guidance cell is very necessary. A well maintained library and reading room for the

general public helps to provide adequate up to date information on various subjects.

Future Thrust of Inetrreligious Activities: We come closer in our religious goals by working together to resolve common needs and common problems more than by confronting each other with differing doctrinal positions on what Sri Buddha characterized as 'avyakrtavastuni', matters on which absolute metaphysical certainty is difficult to achieve. We cannot hope that one religion is going to replace all the others in the world. Religious pluralism is here to stay. So the concern should be that no one religious culture or tradition does exert dominance over the others. We have to be critical of our own faith-traditions since no one cultural expression comprehends or correctly translates the wealth of the supernatural gift of faith. Another's faith cannot be disparaged or discounted as "his faith" or "his tradition". Assuming the unity of the divine plan of salvation for all human beings, and the unity of the religious history of humanity, one has to presume that the other is articulating our own faith and that he may be stressing something which we may have omitted or neglected. But the same critical approach to other faiths also is necessary as a service of fellowship among believers. An ongoing critical analysis of the social and political policies of our nation is a great service which religions can render to the people.

Evangelization, however, has not lost its relevance and meaning. The different religions are not saying the same thing. Evangelization is actually inviting people to examine what is already their own, part of their own heritage. Instead of saying that all will be damned without Jesus the one Saviour, the missionary should announce that the person and redemptive work of Jesus belongs to every one, and that after the death and resurrection of Jesus human history is not the same any more. To a certain extent the same can be said about the unique contributions of Buddha and Mohammed. By accepting Christ no one is denying his own religious background and tradition but only deepening its meaning.

In order to have a result-oriented inter-religious activity, purposeful effort is required coupled with clear vision, dedication and well-defined action plan.

Upasana
Thodupuzha

Inter-religious Fellowship at a Moment of Crisis

Thomas Cheeran

Introduction

It happened some months ago when the members of Divyodaya were invited to organize a training on inter-religious dialogue for seminarians. "What is the meaning of the existence of a Centre like Divyodaya in Coimbatore where communal riots are taking place incessantly?" asked one of the participants. The question was a very relevant one — at a time when Coimbatore was slowly turning to normalcy after the Communal riot of December — 1997. Peace rallies and inter-religious prayer meetings were being organized to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony among the people.

It was really a question that embarrassed all of us. A very relevant question — that we took time to realize its real meaning.

The aim of an inter-religious Centre, is to promote and maintain peace and thereby foster fellowship among people.

Inter-religious dialogue with a purpose

The Second Vatican Council sowed the seeds of inter-religious fellowship and this was accepted all over the world with much enthusiasm. This stand of the Catholic Church was repeatedly made clear by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Madras in 1986. In his message he called for dialogue between different religions as it increased and deepened mutual respect and paved the way for interrelationships. He also added that dialogue helped in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare and civic order. This had a strong influence in the religious and cultural milieu of India — a cradle of many religions. India has a proud tradition of religious people living together in peace, creating a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and composite culture. With this background, many inter-religious

fellowships and dialogue centres were established in different parts of our country.

These Centres provided a venue for deep sharing of religious experience with the members of other religions and became more relevant when they started responding to the stark realities like poverty, hunger and disease, illiteracy and injustice, unemployment and denial of basic human rights, the oppression of women and the exploitation of children, the abuse of the environment, and a rise of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism.

Hence, it is obvious that the role of inter-religious fellowship cannot be restricted to a moment of crisis that is connected with religious dimensions alone. It has to embrace a fellowship for celebrations, for development, for social upliftment, for justice, and for meeting people affected by natural and man-made disasters, thereby covering all aspects of human existence.

Drawback of present-day fellowships

Looking at the present scenario, we cannot claim to have established centers with strong fellowship groups. They often remain at the level of social gathering. These groups have not often penetrated to the grass roots level.

People belonging to peace committees go in for discussions and processions which never have a permanent basis. Once things return to normalcy, everyone would forget it and wake up only when the next flair up occurs probably a few months or years later.

Some are struggling to survive and some have established themselves as working communities, living centres of love and harmony.

Causes for Crisis

There are different theories about the root-cause of this communal problem. Some say that it was instigated by fundamentalists or extremist forces from outside the country. Another view is that it is the handi-work of some anti-social and communal elements from both sides which indulge in such activities to scare and loot the public. Yet another view is that it is an outburst of the suppressed feelings of the members of the minority community who still live in a state of fear and a feeling of uncertainty. Some have come out with the theory that the rampancy of

unemployment and illiteracy among youths in the minority community that had erupted during such communal conflicts. But whatever might be the reason, there is no gainsaying the fact that this could have been easily resolved, as pointed out earlier, if only some serious attempts had been made in the early stages to tackle it. Political parties should not try to politicise it and the common people should be vigilant of this political exploitation especially of the youth.

Needless to say that this problem has now become very complicated because of the cumulative effect of the feelings of disgruntlement and deprivation amongst certain sections of some communities and the dismal failure of the Law and Order machinery to arrest this trend due to political interference in the administration. The general trend of political parties going out of the way to woo the various communities under the garb of secularism has also contributed immensely to the problem getting intractable. We do not want to cast aspersions or make any allegation against any one as the matter of paramount importance today, is to find out how this insidious problem could be resolved once and for all.

Response of fellowship during crises

What is then the role of inter-religious fellowship at a time of crisis especially when communal violence breaks out?

The question is relevant today especially in view of the religious disharmony and disintegration around us. Communal disharmony or communal hatred is something unheard of in this part of the country. The communal hatred that has surfaced now, is a recent phenomenon that has grown over a period of time due to some carelessness and has assumed alarming proportions. Sad to say that today, wherever we look, every country, state or city, we find that there is a clash — a clash of culture, opinion, ideas, faith and religion. We have been witnessing the break down of values, morals and high ideals. Humanity, today is plunged into a crisis — a crisis in which we see very little hope.

Limitations

It is sad to note that we are not able to identify and reach the trouble makers of the grass root level. It shows our limitations in this regard.

The increased trend of violence in socio-religious and political scenario is getting momentum in these years. Celebrations of festivals of religious and national importance and other minor incidents are becoming occasions of polarisation. Cases of communal violence, therefore, become a gateway for certain ideologies which approve such a polarisation.

How to face the situation ?

We can conceive of several approaches, each with its own unique characteristics.

As a first step, we have to look into certain factors that will be helpful for alleviating, diffusing the moment of crisis. A core group with members of inter-religious fellowship can join hands with Govt. officials, politicians, leaders of social acceptance and representatives from voluntary organizations and formulate a plan of action. They could persuade the rival groups to discuss the root cause and pin point the reasons, the process and the effect. These groups must maintain a watch-dog attitude so that the crisis may not repeat again.

People belonging to inter-religious fellowship groups can form a bridge between the rival communities, and thereby teach others to respect human beings, create an attitude of openness and have a right approach towards other religions.

Inter-religious fellowship should envisage short term and long term approaches for solving communal disharmony.

Short term approaches

Short term approaches should aim at redressing the agony and diffuse the tension and clear the situation gradually leading to peaceful co-existence.

A core group consisting of members from voluntary organisations, religious leaders and the like, can organize a peace rally inviting the public. This peace rally with placards and banners with the message of love, peace and harmony, can pass through the sensitive areas. Inter-religious prayer sessions with messages highlighting unity among people, can be organized in different localities.

Week-long prayer sessions can create an awareness of oneness among the people. These prayer sessions led by religious groups and voluntary organizations, can play an effective role in strengthening relationships.

Service-minded people can go to the affected areas and visit the affected people with words of solace. They can approach nearby hospitals and offer assistance in whatever possible way. Day-to-day needs like food and water can be provided.

Mutual visits and fruitful interaction among religious leaders can pave the way to harmonious living. All major religious festivals have to be celebrated so as to spread the message of 'Unity in Diversity'. Inter-religious pilgrimages can help remove misunderstanding in members of different communities considerably.

In an era of inter-religious fellowship, members of various religions can meet together and hold discussions at regional and national levels and thereby, make earnest attempts to search for positive approaches rather than hammering on the conflicting elements in diverse religions.

Long term approaches

Long term approaches, on the other hand help to remove the negative elements, guarantee peace and solidarity among people while checking recurrence of troubles.

Emotional security among children must be promoted by parents by paying personal attention to the upbringing of their children.

The advantages of small family norms and its economic significance should be explained to women through frequent meetings in urban and rural areas.

Peace core groups, among the youth consisting of all religions/castes may be organised. Camps of two or three days on "Communal harmony" may be conducted. The message of Love and Service which is the core of all religions can be explained to them.

Personal contact with the affected people will help build up relationship and confidence in the people. Once we realize that our neighbours are not responsible for our problem, that will be the beginning of a working solution. We can sit together and pool our collective wisdom. Thus we need an introspection of our own culture and religion which would assure peace for society.

Where there is fellowship there is less chance for crisis. Where there is fellowship, there is understanding, respect and

acceptance among the people of different religions. Fellowship gives courage to plunge into action and strengthen unity among members.

Action-oriented dialogue will provide opportunity for interaction among different communities. In this process we forget our differences and we see the members of all communities as one.

Conclusion

The need of the hour is the "Rainbow Culture" — people of different cultural traditions forming a whole. For ultimately, "True religious life expresses itself in love and compassion and aims at the unity of humankind."

True are the words of Rev. Canon Ivar Smith who said, "There will be no peace among nations until there is peace among religions. There will be no peace among religions unless there is dialogue and friendship."

When the Parsis first came to India, the leader sent a message to the King saying that they would like to take refuge in this country. The King thought for a moment, took a bowl full of milk and sent it to the leader of the Parsis. The message was, the bowl is full, there is no place. The leader took some sugar and put it into the bowl, the sugar dissolved at once and he sent it back to the King. The King was pleased and welcomed them. The message was, we will merge ourselves in the mainstream and sweeten the nature of the culture. Thus, if people merge and live together in peace and harmony, there will be no place for crisis, leading to disharmony.

In short our goal should be to create a world of love, unity and harmony. Let our inner lights shine.

Divyodaya,
Coimbatore

We Should not only Pray Together but also Work Together

Baby Shepherd

The Chavara Cultural and Dialogue Centre, Ernakulam, was celebrating the Silver Jubilee of its foundation. There were more than 250 delegates gathered together from both India and abroad. The topic of discussion was the world crisis in the moral behaviour of humanity in the face of corruption, consumerism and other evils unwittingly tolerated even by religious people. The general consensus was that these evils will not vanish by wishful thinking nor by a few religious people getting together and praying for the re-establishment of morality. We have also to fight for it.

The most obvious example is corruption which has become a way of life in various areas of our public life. Corruption is abetted by those who offer bribe to obtain for themselves undeserved favours. Even honest individuals who come into public office with the best of intentions, become corrupted when they find that bribes are readily available and are generally accepted by their peers. Even our religious leaders do not hesitate to offer bribes when they find that it is the only way in which even the most legitimate projects can be executed. The example of a village irrigation project was mentioned for which five lakhs of government money was available. The priest with the project was told by the government official concerned: "Since you get five lakhs free, why not give me one lakh? You can have the job done with three lakhs and keep one for yourself. The priest, of course, refused; but this is the temptation that actually haunts every body. Unless all religions take a strong stand and conscientize people that it is their public funds that are being stolen by unscrupulous people, corruption will go on increasing. Great injustice is committed when jobs are given not to the deserving candidates but to the highest bidder, or when in the highly competitive field of admissions to schools, deserving students are turned away in order to accommodate undeserving ones who come with the largest

amount of money or recommendations from influential people. In such cases recommendation itself is a form of bribery.

When recently the people who had to part with their property in order to accommodate the new airport at Nedumpassery were not paid adequate compensation, Chavara Centre, Ernakulam, organized interreligious protest marches to the disputed area and held prayer meetings to arouse the conscience of people of all faiths against the injustice that was being committed in the name of the public. People of all faiths should feel responsible for the injustices that are committed by public officials in their name. The deeper experience of all religions is that our world is God's world, and that it is a complicated web of interrelationships. Everything is related to everything else. Scientists and mystics agree on this. When a human being is trampled under foot by any one it is our common humanity that is being violated. Destruction of others or of nature is destruction of ourselves. Yet owing to a misinterpretation of religious tenets ignorant and unscrupulous people use religion to promote fanaticism, hatred of individuals and groups perceived as one's enemies, perpetrate injustice and exploitation of women, children and the under-privileged classes for their own selfish interests. Since religious sentiments affect the emotional side of human life religions fail to recognize the atrocity of such behaviour. What they resent in other people, they rationalize in their own lives. Even though on the global level through the efforts of international agencies and the United Nations certain laws have been promulgated and principles established for the protection of various social, cultural and religious groups, yet in practice injustice and discrimination and oppression continue even in the most developed nations.

Consumerism

Another evil which religions have to fight is consumerism. Most people, however, are guilty of it. Although consumerism and materialism to a certain extent boost the national economy, ultimately they cause havoc to personal as well as social existence. Accumulating material goods can never satisfy the human spirit that naturally tends to the infinite. People obsessed with buying always want more to be satisfied but they are never satisfied. We have and we use many things which we actually do not need. We take advantage of our position in society to gain unfair

advantage over others. In reality the more things one has, the less free one is, because things take time and space from us.

Consumerism is a cultural invasion from abroad through mass media especially after the recent economic liberalization. It is however, neither possible nor desirable to arrest the liberalization process. The answer is mass education of people through a greater emphasis on religious values of renunciation and sacrifice. The shining lives of great men and women of our nation of all religious traditions is the best way to demonstrate how the human spirit can always soar above the entanglements of matter and the enticement of power which money and possessions bring. The passive entertainment brought by television has an enslaving effect on human character. Though we cannot say that we should never watch television, we have to be selective and use our power to turn television off when the selected programme is over. Though a good television programme can be enlightening or relaxing, watching it for hours nearly always leaves one with an empty feeling. The human spirit yearns for expression in creativity, in challenges, in communing with nature and properly ordered meditation on the ultimate meaning of life promoted by religions. That people are driven to view the "idiot box" owing to lack of anything more creative and meaningful is an indication that religions are not doing their job.

Some unsuspecting victims of this consumerist culture are children. Parents and religious leaders have the responsibility to study the hidden curriculum the promoters of various products have in directly addressing children. Though throwing out television is not realistic, we can carefully select what young children watch. Children even from elementary school age have to be educated to resist advertising. Tapes of the usual commercial ads can be shown to the children and they can be asked: "Do you think that by drinking this particular soft drink you can jump like the athlete who is shown drinking it?" "Do these ads appeal to your emotions or to your good judgment?" If the younger generation is taught to be analytical and critical of what comes on the screen they can break the hold multinational corporations have or tries to have on the minds of people.

One of the greatest gifts as human beings is one's uniqueness. By attempting to create artificial needs for the products the

advertisers have out in the market they try to put all into the same mould, prompting that all should see the same movies, have the same toys, read the same books. Each one has a unique vocation in life. The task of religions is to help one discover the unique way one can contribute to the future of humanity.

Conclusion

If religions are to help humanity progress holistically in physical, moral and spiritual health for the next millennium, mere discussions or even fervent prayers are not enough, but a clear line of action has to be taken. On the personal level each one should realize the necessity of spiritual power for any useful activity and devote some time each day to quiet contemplation and a clear plan of action. Living in simplicity each one should endeavour to be honest, and everyday help at least one person who is poor or handicapped or underprivileged. On the collective level a vigorous campaign should be launched against corruption and injustices of all kinds. Group pressure should be exercised on mass media to prevent all that is unhealthy, immoral or destructive. All have to support methods for inculcating religious, moral and ethical values in schools and colleges.

Prior General's House
Ernakulam
Kochi — 682 011

Leadership in Inter-religious Dialogue*

Antony Kalliath

Some major centres in India for inter-religious dialogue like the Chavara Culture and Dialogue Centre Ernakulam, the Centre for the Study of World Religions, Bangalore, and Divyodaya, Coimbatore, were started more than twenty five years ago. Then they were perceived as a new movement in the spirit of the positive outlook on other religions initiated by Vatican II. Today there is a marked weakening of enthusiasm for dialogue which seems to be almost at a dead end. It is necessary, therefore, to investigate the reasons for this decline in order to give it a new impetus since today we need it more than ever.

Vatican II marked a clear departure from the traditional negative approach to other religions. Ever since the Axial Period of 900-200 BCE different religions were pitted against one another according to their differing perceptions of the Deity. Looking for what united all people who belonged to the one human race the Council stated that all religions were united in the search for answers to the ultimate existential questions of human life and that they all belonged to the one religious history of humanity and the one divine economy of human salvation. The initial enthusiasm which this noble insight generated has in recent times suffered a setback, when the high hopes and utopian dreams entertained in the mission of inter-faith meetings got shattered by the world-wide rise of communal and fundamentalist tendencies. The leadership of the inter-religious ministry was forced to admit realistically the in-built limits and constraints of the dialogues going on among religions. Though religion is about God and spiritual realities, it is nevertheless a human phenomenon deeply influenced by social, communal and political realities. In fact, encounter with other religions sent people back to their own religions to appreciate and defend every detail of their traditions.

* Summary of Paper presented at CSWR consultation, Bangalore, March 2, 1998

The crucial debate in the recent parliamentary and assembly elections was between a narrow cultural and religious nationalism on the one hand and the pluralistic cultural and religious identity of our polity on the other. Then more than at any other time in our history politicians discussed the dangers of a mono-cultural and mono-religious paradigm in defining the national identity of India offered by the Hindutva vada of BJP which advocated one nation and one culture (and one religion?.) This suggested a cultural and religious nationalism of a fundamentalist nature challenging the age old composite nature of the social fabric of Indian polity. The widespread violence, terrorism, bloodshed and religious rancour let loose in the recent elections made people more than ever convinced of the urgent need for inter-faith harmony and peace for the very survival of Bharata as a nation.

What is required is to temper the euphoria and naive optimism which the interreligious movement generated in the seventies and eighties with the hard realities of religious existence and experience in a pluralistic society intertwined with the cultural heritage and political and social identity of the people. That means that a new paradigm is required for inter-religious dialogue, a new perception of religion itself and a new perspective of the relationship of religions. The framework within which religions were dealt with in the past and the methodology used for dialogue have become today obsolete. They do not address the present complex nature of the encounter of religions.

A Theological Issue

The old models of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism arose from a purely comparative study of religions. The exclusivists thought that their religion alone was right and all others wrong; the inclusivist maintained that his religion contained the values of all others and that he had nothing to learn from them; the pluralist considered the different religions as several unconnected ways leading to the same summit or different rivers flowing into the same ocean. But these comparisons have no place when the different religions are considered as different moments in the one history of humanity or integral to the one divine plan for the salvation of all. Dialogue is no longer a missionary strategy or the effort to show the superiority of one religion over the others. No one religion is expected to replace all others. Hence the

theology of religions has to explain how the one divine faith, God's gift to all his children, gets differently interpreted in different historical, political and cultural situations. It is a faith reflection on the interdependence and relationality of the religions of the world in unravelling the mystery of God's self-disclosure in human history and humankind's experience of salvation.

Hence a meaningful dialogue among religions demands three basic conditions. These conditions are to a certain extent valid also in exploring systems and thought frameworks removed in time from us like the actual meaning of Scriptural texts composed centuries ago in cultural conditions totally different from our own. The first is that one should think in terms not of separate notions but of complex clusters of ideas and attitudes as interdependent wholes lest one should fail to see the wood for the trees. The second is as Kierkegaard has stated one should not expect to find the street addresses of Copenhagen with only a world map in hand for guidance. We have to combine the macroscopic study of wider frames of reference with the microscopic study of specific religious issues and problems. The third is that we have to combine commitment to a particular religious tradition with an objective scholarly study of the same. It is true that scholarly investigation has sometimes blunted the faith-sensitivity of people. But faith without objectivity tends to superstition and fundamentalism.

The Cultural and Social Levels of Dialogue

It is clearly felt today that India cannot progress in its march towards greater unity and harmony with the traditional attitude of mere tolerance of other religions as merely popular expressions of religion far inferior to the intuitive experience of mystics just to be tolerated with a condescending attitude of tolerance. The traditional paradigms of tolerance or even neutrality are incapable of containing communal violence and savagery perpetrated in the name of religion. What is needed is a more creative and positive collaboration among religions in understanding the social evils if the country is to survive in its composite culture.

In fact hardly 20% of the population follow what are designated as "World Religions", the major traditions like Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, while the rest 80% are members of folk religions such as that of the Tribals and

Dalits, namely the Little Traditions which form the religion of the oppressed and marginalized. Hence a dialogue centre devoted to the study only of World Religions has no sufficient relevance. It has to expand its scope to the study of the Religions of the world.

From Praxis Theory

As I have already indicated the present impasse in inter-religious dialogue is owing to the fact that the present procedure is dominated by academics. Often our dialogues are understood in terms of seminars and debates and remain on the cerebral level. In order to make the inter-religious ministry competent and meaningful it has to become more people-participative and people-oriented. It has to be envisaged at four levels. First of all dialogue of life is on the plane of being and the goal is living together in peace enriching one another by bearing witness to the values people stand for. In fact, on this level there is very little difference among people of different faiths. There is general agreement on what is right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust as well as on the rights and duties of all humans, though there may be differences in arguing out why it is so.

Secondly there should be dialogue of action in order that people of different faiths and traditions may work together to oppose whatever enslaves and degrades people, defending the weak and siding with the oppressed. As a sublimation of this action for the public well-being come feasts and celebrations to express various sentiments of adoration of God, thanksgiving for benefits received, repentance for sins and the like and to mark special occasions like the seasons of the year. These sentiments and their expressions can be shared by all peoples.

A third level of dialogue is that of religious experience, where one opens oneself to God's movements in the lives of people of other faiths. Here we have a convergent diversity: the sources of experience are different but they all meet in the same objective reality. Whether God be experienced as the Form of all forms or as the one Creator of heaven and earth, or as the Self of all selves, it is one and the same ultimate Reality they all point to. But when one tries to explain these experiences in philosophical terms and systems there is radical divergence. This is the fourth level of dialogue namely of theological exchange. Here one can

only devise strategies to explain to each other one's basic concerns, world-views and methods of procedure. This is not intended to end in common formulation or discovery of a common denominator.

There are various practical steps to be taken to make the dialogue ministry meaningful and fruitful. A networking of the various centres of inter-religious dialogue will greatly contribute to strengthen and give greater credibility to this special form of apostolate. Creating regional and national forums in which the various centres can pool their experiences and jointly plan their programmes will be very helpful. Conducting camps, discussions, retreats and the like on inter-religious themes at the High School and College levels both for teachers and students with the active support of the various centres will be greatly helpful to create an inter-religious fellowship in the very process of education.

Dialogue is the new way of being the Church.

Dharmaram College
Bangalore — 560 029

The Jewish-Christian Dialogue as a Paradigm of Interreligious Dialogue

John W. Healey

The author who is a trained theologian and has taught theology has long been participating in Jewish-Christian dialogue. In this article he shows the uniqueness of the Church's relationship with Judaism by the reason of its rootedness in the history of Israel. Vatican II's decree *Nostra Aetate* marked a turning-point in the Church's relationship to Judaism. Though it was a minimal statement of that relationship it removed a major obstacle to the post conciliar dialogue. Subsequent scholarly development is important with its emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus and the awareness of the separation of Church and synagogue. The article concludes with a personal postscript.

Shortly before the Second Vatican Council Pope John XXIII asked Augustin Cardinal Bea to prepare a statement on the Church's relationship to the Jewish people. Cardinal Bea was at that time the Chair of the Council's Secretariat for Christian Unity but also a noted Biblical scholar with a special competence on the Scriptural links between Jews and Christians.

How that original proposal developed, and eventually came to be incorporated into the Council's decree on "The Church's Relationship to Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostra Aetate*) is indicative both of what is special, or even unique, in the Church's relationship to Judaism, and also of how the understanding of this special relationship might provide a paradigm for the Church's relationship to all non-Christian religions.

The Christian Church's special and unique relationship to Judaism has, for thousands of years, been a stormy, even hostile, relationship. It is generally agreed that the Pope's request to Cardinal Bea was occasioned, at least in part, by a visit to the Vatican of Jules Isaac, a French Jewish historian, who emphasized with the Pope "the teaching of contempt" for Judaism which had in some ways prepared the ground for the horrors of the

European "Holocaust". Pope John XXIII had been aware of these horrors and, as a papal diplomat in Turkey, had been active in saving Jews from Nazi persecution.

Looking back on Pope John's proposal, especially from the vantage point of current relations between Christians and Jews, one would think that the proposed decree would have been received with great enthusiasm by the Council's bishops and would have been passed with quick unanimity. In fact, the decree brought to a head tensions between Christians and Jews, including, it must be said, some continuing Christian anti-Semitism and some continuing Jewish distrust of Christian intentions. There were moreover some very specific concerns on the part of bishops from the Middle East, who feared that a theological decree affirming continuity between Jews and Christians would be read as covert support for the State of Israel and would lead to reprisals against Arab Christians. Some Asian bishops also expressed their concern that the Church needed to clarify its relationships also to Buddhism and Hinduism, and not just to Judaism. As a result of these concerns, and after many debates, the decree "Nostra Aetate" which began as a Jewish-Christian document ended as a decree concerning the relationship of the Church to the larger Asian religious traditions, to Islam and to Judaism, with Judaism in fact treated last in its statements on the Church's regard and respect for these traditions.

For all the debate, political machinations, modifications and anxieties which "Nostra Aetate" occasioned, the decree nonetheless marked a turning point in the Church's relationship to Judaism. The decree in itself did not meet all Jewish hopes. It did not acknowledge any Christian responsibility for the Holocaust or in any way recognize the State of Israel, both of which would be expressed as major Jewish concerns after the Council and which would in fact be addressed by the Church in the years following the Council. That the decree fell short of these Jewish expectations is perhaps indicative of an asymmetry in Jewish and Christian perspectives. Jewish concerns tend to be *historical*, and to be linked with memories of suffering and persecution in Western Christendom. Christian concerns tend to be *theological* and much more centered on the mystery of God's intentions for Israel after the coming of Jesus and with the relationship of the Church to Israel.

The difference in perspectives has continued after the Council but there have been new initiatives on the part of Jewish scholars such as Jacob Neusner, Alan Segal and Jon Levenson, which may mark the beginnings of almost the first Jewish-Christian *theological* conversation in two thousand years!

Reading the history of the Council's debates, even the debate on *Nostra Aetate* marked the beginnings of a new Christian perspective on Israel. To some extent, Christian history, especially on a popular level, has tended to focus on such seemingly "anti-Semitic" texts as Matthew's "His blood be upon us and our children" (Matt. 27:25). "The Council, on the other hand, chose to define the relation of the church to Israel in terms of the ninth to eleventh chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. These chapters, despite some ambiguities, clearly express God's continuing fidelity to Israel and have been read by some exegetes as a warning to the Gentile Christians of Rome — those "grafted into Israel" like a wild olive branch (Romans 11:17) — lest they think of themselves as having somehow "superseded" Israel in God's sight.

While the Second Vatican itself did not formally address the horrifying charge of "deicide" which Jules Isaac had told the Pope was used as justification for the "teaching of contempt" for the Jews, the Council did insist that the New Testament could not be used to justify persecution and clearly stated that the death of Jesus—the grounds for the "deicide" charge could not be blamed on the Jewish people as a whole or on contemporary Jews. More positively, and appealing again to Romans 9-11 the Council affirmed the Church's debt to Israel for its scriptures and its basic faith.

As we look back almost forty years later, the statement of the Vatican Council is clearly a turning point in Jewish-Christian relations, but still an almost minimal statement of the Church's own rootedness in the people of Israel.

In the years following the Council much "official" work has been done to extend the results of the Council into the life of the church. Several national bishops' conferences have established commissions and conferences to encourage Jewish-Christian discussions. In the United States, for example, the national bishops conference is one of three sponsors (with the

National Council of Churches and the American Jewish Committee) of a biannual conference on Jewish-Christian relations. Several national churches, both Catholic and Protestant, have issued guidelines on how Christians are to speak of their bonds with Judaism, and several conferences have also issued statements accepting responsibility for Christian participation in the Holocaust. (The Vatican's own 1997 statement on "the Shoah" — the Jewish term for the Holocaust—was less forthright than the Jewish community hoped for, but the fact that discussions on both the statement and on Jewish objections could continue without excessive acrimony, is perhaps the best indication of the new relationship between Catholic Christians and Jews.) Finally, the Vatican's 1993 recognition of the State of Israel has removed a lingering Jewish doubt about the realism of *Nostra Aetate* and has removed a major obstacle to the post-conciliar dialogue.

On a scholarly level two post-conciliar developments are especially important: (1) increasing emphasis on "the Jewishness of Jesus" and (2) a greater awareness of how and when the separation of Church and Synagogue took place.

That Jesus was Jewish hardly comes as a surprise to Christians, but the new emphasis on Jesus' "Jewishness" and the growing recognition of Jesus' location within Second Temple Judaism are the result both of a new Christian emphasis on the humanity of Jesus and a new willingness of Jewish scholars to recognize Jesus as truly one of their own people — no matter how much these Jewish scholars may regret later Christian "theologizing" of Jesus.

The very titles of recent works on Jesus reflect this new emphasis, somewhat indirectly in E.P. Sanders' *Jesus and Judaism*, and N. T. Wright's *Jesus and Victory of God* and quite directly in John Meier's *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking The Historical Jesus* and John Dominic Crossan's *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. Similarly, and from a Jewish perspective, Gaeza Vermes in *Jesus, the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospel* and Paula Fredriksen in *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*, recognized Jesus' "Jewishness".

Despite a general agreement, however, these authors would not necessarily agree on just *how* Jesus was Jewish. Although

both are Roman Catholic, Crossan's Jesus is on the model of a "peasant Jewish Cynic" while Meier's is closer to a traditionally observant Jew of the Second Temple period. There will be important disagreements also about the extent to which Jesus did or did not understand himself as an "eschatological prophet" (Meier, Wright and Sanders more or less say "yes"; Crossan and his "Jesus seminar colleagues", more or less "no"). There are disagreements also about Jesus' observance of "purity laws" and his historical relations with the Pharisees of his time. But, once again, despite these sometimes important disagreements, there is a consensus that Jesus did indeed initiate one of the several reform movements *within* Second Temple Judaism and, more particularly, that the incident in the Temple, most probably at the end of his ministry, was a dramatic symbol of his movement and the proximate occasion of his arrest and execution.

Even on the more sensitive matter of the "theologizing" of Jesus and the early Christian community's recognition of Jesus as "Son of God", there is a growing awareness of the crucial importance of the Wisdom traditions of Judaism and of the many ways in which God's presence among the people of Israel was increasingly recognized without any denial of God's ultimate transcendence. On this count too, and against this background, John's "the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us", is more easily understood as understandably "Jewish" rather than a purely Greek import into Judaism.

Just as Jesus' own "Jewishness" is increasingly recognized, so there is a growing interest in the early Christian communities out of which the Gospels came in the 50-60 years after Jesus' death. Once again, it is clear, as it was always clear from the Acts of the Apostles, that the members of the early Jerusalem Church (not yet called "Christian") believed themselves to be a movement within Israel and that the full break between Church and Synagogue took many years to develop. Among Catholics, Raymond Brown and John Meier have been in the forefront of these historical studies in their work *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* and Brown's *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves and Hates of An Individual Church in New Testament Times*. Brown's work here and in his major work on the Gospel and Epistles of John is especially important in showing the origin of the most

allegedly "anti-Semitic" texts in the New Testament in a largely "intra-Jewish" controversy towards the end of the first century C. E., when Jewish-Christians believed themselves to be victims of Jewish hostility. (This, of course, does not in any way justify the later use of those texts to justify the anti-Semitism which resulted from a misreading of the texts.) More recently even the title of Anthony Saldarini's *Matthews' Jewish Christian Community* is evidence of a growing scholarly consensus on the "Jewishness" not only of Jesus but also of early Christianity of which Matthew's Gospel, with its image of Jesus as a "new Moses", is an outstanding example.

Awareness of this history has made both Christians and Jews more cautious in explaining the break between Church and Synagogue, but the fact is that the break did occur and become increasingly bitter in the early centuries of the Common Era. Among Jews and, in a different way, among Christians, Paul of Tarsus has been blamed (or honored) for making this break. There is a growing awareness today that *both* early Christianity *and* the Rabbinic Judaism which became dominant after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple [in 70 CE) represented new movements within Judaism. Jewish scholars too recognize a "newness" but will also see Rabbinic Judaism as in continuity with Phariseeism and as a post-Temple renewal of the Sinai covenant.

One Jewish scholar who has addressed the unity and division between these two movements is Professor Alan Segal of Barnard College in New York. The title of Segal's book is again indicative of unity within division, i.e., *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World*. Earlier Segal had addressed the Rabbinic challenge to what the rabbis understood as a distortion of Israel's faith in *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*. Most recently he has written a very significant study of Paul from within a Jewish perspective, *Paul, The Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*.

Segal's book on Paul, which has been well-received by Christian critics, locates Paul's conversion experience in the context of an early form of Jewish mysticism. He makes the point also that Paul's critique of "the Law" should not be taken as a critique of the Sacred Torah but as an exemption for the Gentile

"God fearers" from circumcision and those "special laws" which had come to define the Jewish community but which need not be imposed on the Gentile converts. In effect, Segal sees Paul himself as conflicted even about his own need to observe these laws once he has moved into a predominantly Gentile Christian community but not as the "apostate" which he must have seemed to be to fellow Jews and even to the so-called "Judaizing" Jewish Christians. This reading of Paul squares very much with contemporary Christian readings of Romans 9-11, which have become the most basic texts in Christian readings of Judaism. Segal's Paul would presumably agree also with the teaching of the new *Catholic Catechism* that "the gifts and call of God (to Israel) are irrevocable" (n.839) and that both Jews and Christians are "tending (*sic*, in the present tense) toward similar goals, expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah" (n.840).

Other Jewish scholars have also dealt perceptively with the separation of Church and Synagogue. In the Spring, 1992 issue of *Cross Currents*, the extraordinarily profile Jacob Neusner declared that there never has been a true Jewish-Christian "dialogue", but that one might now begin. Neusner himself has made major contributions to this dialogue, e.g. in his joint work with the Catholic Andrew Greeley (*Common Ground: A Priest and a Rabbi Read Scripture Together*) and with the Anglican Bruce Chilton (e.g. *Jewish-Christian Debates: God Kingdom Messiah* and their trilogy published as *Christianity and Judaism—The Formative Categories*).

Jon Levenson has dealt with the issue less directly but significantly in the closing chapters of his extra-ordinary work, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*. In that work, Levenson argues that "supersessionism", i.e., the replacement of Judaism by Christianity is rooted in the classic struggle of "sons in the history of the patriarchs", i.e., between "Rebecca's Christian and Rabbinic children", who repeat the history of Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Essau, Joseph and his brothers. In this scenario, only one brother can truly "win" the inheritance and so the Church and Synagogue are inevitably involved in what is somehow like a zero-based religious competition.

The current Christian move away from "supersessionism", as exemplified in the *Catholic Catechism's* two-fold, different

but linked. "waiting" for the Messiah, would argue against Levenson's inevitable competition for God's favor. But even Jacob Neusner, who has himself ventured into conversation with Christians, would claim that there has not yet been a genuine dialogue between Jews and Christians.

The basic reason for this lack of dialogue would be the vehement Rabbinic resistance, from the earliest days of Christianity, against a doctrine of Incarnation, or, in Segal's terms, against the possibility of "two powers in heaven." Even on a popular level, it is often taken for granted that the doctrines of the Trinity and the divine sonship of Jesus are unbridgeable doctrinal gaps between Jews and Christians, or, perhaps better, "uncrossable borders." In many presentations of Christian doctrine, this might be true, but it is worth noting that many years ago GK. Prestige argued (in *God and Patristic Thought*) that the definitions of Nicaea — the first conciliar formulation of Trinitarian doctrine was in fact a defense of *monotheism* against Arianism. Neusner himself has suggested that *Torah* itself is in some ways analogous to "Incarnation" and a similar point is made by those who read Jesus in the context of a "presence of the divine Wisdom."

For these grounds of dialogue to make sense, however, one would have to be willing in some way to speculate about the inner reality of God, as the Jewish Philosopher, Philo may have done the century before the birth of Christ and as the authors of Wisdom literature might have done. One would, that is, have to do "theology." But such theology is in many ways alien to the tradition of rabbinic Judaism in which "theologians" such as Moses Maimonides ("Rabbi Moyses" for Aquinas) are the exception rather than the rule.

In his book, *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew*, the contemporary Jewish theologian cites the twentieth century Jewish thinker, *Mordeiai Kaplan* to the effect that there are three ways of identifying with a religious community: *believing, behaving or belonging*. Kaplan himself chose to *belong*, i.e., to establish kinship with the Jewish people by sharing in its history and its culture. Gillman will deal with *believing* but he admits that this is a minority position within Rabbinic Judaism, which is less concerned with belief than *behavior* i.e., with a careful understanding of God's law as revealed in the Torah and

further understood in the Talmud. In this context, debates about the inner life of God, which occupied the Greek Fathers are in fact alien to Jewish thought and must seem an exclusively "Christian" concern.

Because issues of "peoplehood" rather than "belief" are of primary importance to the Jewish community, it makes sense that Jews would be more concerned about Christian recognition of the State of Israel—which, for Jews, has enormous symbolic and real significance as their "Land" — and Christian responsibility in the Holocaust rather than Christian beliefs in the Trinity and the Incarnation. Thus it is not likely that even contemporary Christian discussions of Christology will receive a high priority in the Jewish view of "dialogue" .

In addition to these obstacles to genuine dialogue between Jews and Christians, and most fundamentally it is also true that Jews have no reason to ask the very questions which Christians bring into the dialogue. As Jews, they may indeed come to recognize Jesus as one of their own greatest prophets, although even that would require them to rewrite important parts of their own tradition. If they are willing to be patient with Christian discussions, they may be able to see that a Christian understanding of the Trinity is not inconsistent with Israel's monotheism. But in the end, Christian affirmations of faith grow out of *Christian* experience — a Christian hearing of the Scriptures, a Christian sharing in the sacramental life of the Church and a Christian sharing in the mission of the Church. For most Christians this experience begins with learning a language — the Christian language of faith which may not yet be a personal language. In time, however, and perhaps even in a very short time, the individual Christian will perhaps say, as the Samaritan villagers say in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel, "Now we believe, not because of your saying (the Samaritan woman) but we have heard him ourselves and indeed know that this indeed is the Christ, the Savior of the World (John 4:42)." Such personal faith may be nurtured in study and clarified in dialogue, but it is achieved only in a prayerful living of the Christian life. It is perhaps appropriate here to cite also the words of T. S. Eliot from "Little Gidding" of *The Four Quarters*: "You are not here to verify, instruct yourself, or inform curiosity or carry report. You are here to kneel where prayer has been valid."

If the experiences out of which grow Christian and Jewish faiths are so different, it may seem at times as if genuine interreligious dialogue is finally impossible. On the other hand, the experience of Christians and Jews who have attempted dialogue in the years following the Second Vatican Council prove that these attempts lead to greater respect for each other, and clarify misunderstandings. Dialogue may be difficult, but it does happen.

The one thing which dialogue does *not* do and which it does not intend, is *conversion*, unless perhaps one understands "conversion" to affect both parties to the dialogue. This has certainly been the case in the Jewish-Christian dialogue as Christians have had to rethink their usual notions of "supersessionism" in the light of Romans 9-11 and in a newer, humbler recognition of God's continuing covenant with Israel. Jews, somewhat more cautiously, have been led to rethink their own exclusivism, especially insofar as they have come to recognize that *both* Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity were both movements with roots in Second Temple Judaism.

There are ways in which the Christian-Jewish dialogue is unique by reason of these roots of Christianity in the history of Israel: the Jewishness of Jesus himself, shared notions of an historical revelation on Sinai, Christian acceptance of Israel's scriptures also as "Christian" Scripture, and even, we might now say, a shared waiting for the "coming" or "return" of the Messiah. To some extent these are also shared assumptions of Christianity with Islam, including an extraordinary (though not in the same sense, unique) role accorded to Jesus in the history of salvation. Given these shared historical understandings dialogue between Christians, Jews (and Muslims) can begin in a different place from interreligious dialogue with other world religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism with which Christianity does not share Scripture or a similar understanding of historical revelation. But the same openness to "listening before speaking", which has enabled Jews and Christians to understand each other in a new way, and the same willingness to recognize how easily we misunderstand each other can certainly be brought into all interreligious dialogue. For Catholic Christians too there are perhaps as yet untapped resources in a long established mystical tradition and in the theological absorption of mysticism which can provide better starting points for dialogue than an exclusively, or even primarily,

propositional understanding of revelation. But what is essential to all dialogue is the humble recognition of the mystery of "God", and of our own still partial grasp of that mystery. In this sense, as we enter into any interreligious dialogue, we might profitably sit at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel who initiated a Jewish-Christian dialogue that ended all too quickly and has only recently begun again:

"But a Pharisee in the Council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and ordered (the apostles) to be put outside for a while and he said (to the council) ... if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them" [Acts of the Apostles, 6: 34; 39].

Too often in past centuries, crusades, colonialism and even attempts at "conversion" may have been all-too human attempts at institutional self-aggrandizement or even an all-too human desire to be exclusively "right" in our propositional grasp of the truth. To this extent, Gamaliel was surely right, and these "undertakings of men" did fail. Even now, we can only hope, and pray that our dialogue will be "of God." This does not mean that we will come to agreement where we have disagreed for two thousand years. Nor does it indicate willingness to negotiate away either Jewish or Christian faith. But neither does it mean that we must know just where the dialogue will lead us, for we all stand under the judgement of a God "who makes all things new". Let us therefore wait with the patience — and humility — which Rabbi Gamaliel once counselled his own community to show.

A Personal Postscript

For several years now, my participation in Christian-Jewish dialogue has been as an individual member of a Roman Catholic parish community. Although trained as a theologian and having taught Catholic theology I have not spoken in an "official" capacity.

In reflecting on my experience I have become aware of what I believe is a difference between "official" dialogues, conducted under Church auspices and the more personal dialogues which often develop out of friendships formed between members of different religious communities.

Each of these dialogues has its own advantages and limitations. In the case of Jewish Christian dialogue, the Jewish

community has wanted "official" responses to *Nostra Aetate* with all of that Decree's gains and perceived limitations.

One limitation of official "dialogue" however is its need to reflect, as far as possible, a consensus achieved within the church, —and not always easily achieved, as the Council debates on *Nostra Aetate* showed. Official statements need to be sensitive to internal pastoral needs and to avoid the tensions which a seeming change in doctrine or even doctrinal attitudes can occasion within the Christian community. Official statements must also be to some extent backward looking insofar as the dialogue begins with doctrinal statements (e. g. in Christology) fixed by Councils of the church centuries ago and must not seem to compromise, or negotiate away those fixed positions.

The risks of more personal, less "official" dialogues are different. Given the friendship and mutual respect which often develop between participants in the dialogue, there may be an inclination to soften or negotiate the fundamental differences which have for centuries separated religious traditions from each other. To avoid this risk it is important that the individual theologian remain in contact with, and be ready to be challenged by official teaching and official teachers.

On the other hand the individual theologian has the freedom to probe the full complexity of the Christian tradition, e. g., the diverse Christologies of the New Testament, the diverse Patristic theologies of Antioch and Alexandria and of the medieval tradition. Being thus free to ask questions of the tradition and not simply to repeat it more forcefully, the individual theologian may discover convergences between traditions or even resolve seeming contradictions, as has in fact happened in Roman Catholic-Protestant dialogues on such crucial questions as justification by faith and Eucharistic presence.

Each dialogue is, of course, different. Protestant-Catholic dialogues, for all the acrimony of the past, begin with a shared commitment to the New Testament. Christian Jewish dialogue and Muslim Christian dialogue are different but both acknowledge an Abrahamic covenant. With other traditions, it is the diversity of mystical and philosophical traditions which the theologian must probe to see if perhaps our religious experience is in fact closer than we might have thought or if our diverse expression of that

experience might be complementary rather than contradictory. In this probing of the traditions, the freedom of the individual theologian is crucial, if the dialogue is not to be, as it has often seemed to be, only the confrontation of different religious ideologies.

Two outstanding examples of such theological work would be the many essays of Karl Rahner aptly entitled, at least in English, *Theological Investigations* — and Edward Schillebeeckx's *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*. Neither Rahner nor Schillebeeckx were primarily committed to interreligious dialogue but were writing in service of the internal needs of the modern church. But their courageous willingness to ask questions of their own tradition were the sort of work which earlier theologians, such as Yves Congar, did and which ultimately led to "official" documents such as the Second Vatican Council's decrees on "Ecumenism" and "The Relationship of the church to Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostra Aetate*).

"Dialogue" therefore proceeds at different levels and in different ways, but at its best it is always a manifestation of the one theological task — faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*). Only when it is a "quest" rather than a confrontation, is it likely to succeed.

Director
Archbishop Hughes Institute
on Religion and Culture

Christian Initiatives, Involvement in Inter-Religious Dialogues: Scope and Dimensions

Albert Nambiaparambil*

Organising dialogue meetings and subsequently dialogue centres have been the life's work of Dr. Albert Nambiaparampil CMI throughout his priestly life. The following article contains his personal reflections mostly on his own work and not a critical evaluation.

Let me at the very outset give a note of caution. These reflections are written in a mood of sharing and naturally I have to be rather experiential and personal here. As one involved for years in this pilgrimage of inter-religious dialogue these reflections are related to the commitment that was mine for years. There was always the question: Where do we go from here? The question was about the future of dialogue itself. For, there were serious doubts about dialogue reaching an impasse owing to its apparent contradiction with the missionary task of communicating the Gospel to all peoples. All that euphoria that was there in the atmosphere after Vatican Council II and the vibrations that were visible and audible in the Indian scene nurtured by a series of regional seminars ended up in the "Church in India Seminar" of 1969. The questions and expectations raised by the All India Seminar regarding inter-religious dialogue are still with us, calling for a new approach and a new effort to make those dialogues more than ever necessary, meaningful and fruitful.

* Dr. Albert Nambiaparambil was secretary for the CBCI commission for interreligious dialogue from January 1973 to January '94 with only a short break in between. He still continues his interest in the dialogue ministry. He was directly involved in the foundation and running of four dialogue centres, namely, Chavara Cultural Centre, Kochi, Upasana, Thodupuzha, Sangamam, Munnar and Sopanam at Adimali (ed.).

The first inter-faith "Live Together" experiment after the Church in India Seminar was at Benares in January 1973 as a take-off in the dialogue adventure. Hindus, Muslims and Christians were living, praying, singing and meditating together, sharing their personal stories for three days. That was for most of the participants the very first experience in this line. They felt the freshness and warmth of this dialogue exploration, and the interesting fact is that even after decades many of them still retain the close relationship developed in that meeting of minds and hearts. The long cherished stereotypes that were shattered and the fears once removed in and through this path of openness and celebrations of communion would no more be blocks among them! Though the question raised again and again by outsiders as "what have you achieved?" remains unanswered to their satisfaction, for the insiders who participated in the pilgrimage and still celebrate the inter-faith communion it is not disturbing.

There is no attempt here to justify one or other of the religions in dialogue or to relate it to the path of the evangelizing mission. For Christians inter-faith dialogue flows from the Christian vocation, from authentic Christian life, from the conviction that God wills the salvation of all, that all religions in one way or another belong to the one divine economy of human salvation, that they all form different moments in the one religious history of humanity and that they are not parallel paths mutually unrelated. The need for dialogue comes from the human structure of religions which, as Karl Marx has said, become in the hands of ruling classes, tools to maintain and safeguard their power structures. In every religion there are two contrasting movements, one for a holy war against other religions and the other for bringing all God's children into peace and harmony. It is this dynamism of conflict, which actually moves the contending parties to see the transitory character of the conflict and to move towards a resolution of the conflicting issues. Conflict naturally arises from the human capacity for disagreement based on the inadequacy of every particular event or statement to represent absolute truth. Categorical reason functions on contrary principles of thought and object of thought, consciousness and object of consciousness. All that humans can do in this natural situation of disagreement is to work towards a compromise that can guarantee free moral cooperation.

Our various dialogue centres in Kerala, Bangalore, Coimbatore, and others which gave primary importance to culture as a medium of religious discourse, were honest efforts to bring people of different religious convictions to face problems together and work out viable solutions acceptable to all. Poet G. Shankarakurup of Kerala receiving the first membership card at Kochi on August 8, 1971 aptly expressed the hope and expectations of all by wishing for the newly founded Centre: "Let this new born baby be for all a forum to come together, to celebrate together, to bring in their own vision and ray of experience into this confluence of cultures." In fact, religions meet in the confluence of cultures and the co-operation of various cultural centres.

Each religion has got its own distinctive world view constituted of truth propositions, a coherent system of approach to one or other of the basic problems of humanity such as the bafflement at the phenomena of nature for the Greeks and for the West as a whole, the struggle between the good God and his adversary Satan for the Middle East and the phenomenon of the suffering of the innocent for Eastern religions. It is not easy to bring all these radically differing systems and their methodologies into harmony. All that can be achieved is to devise strategies by which problems and issues in one system can be translated into other systems. The very nature of belief is that it demands a radical commitment though it may be couched in the thought structure of the system. So a person may be ready to die in order to defend a particular belief of his tradition rather than give it up. The only way out of the straight jacket of a particular tradition of beliefs and customs is to realize that they are all culturally conditioned. But the ground reality of human selfishness and desire for domination and power imperceptibly penetrate the honest commitment to the true values of one's tradition. Only an honest attempt to critically examine and interpret the motivation behind one's own tradition can prepare people for dialogue with others.

Having given expression to aggressive passions, humans cool down especially in the face of defeats, humiliations and tragedies, and initiatives are taken to create situations where moral values will be cultivated and practiced. The first step is a courageous attempt to understand the other for which one has to open oneself to the other. Such openness is possible not through

confrontation but only through encounter and dialogue. A good example is given in the Buddhist classic *Milindapanna*. When King Meander invites the Buddhist Nagasena for a religious discussion the latter replies that such discussion is impossible with a King who would naturally tend to eliminate everyone that disagrees with him but a discussion is possible with him as a scholar: "When scholars discuss there is summing up, unraveling; one or other is shown to be in error, and he admits his mistake and yet is not thereby angered". What Nagasena demanded from the King was a bracketing of the political principle, which is a principle of domination and coercion and its replacement by the social principle which is one of friendship and fellowship. One relationship is vertical while the other is horizontal. All partners in dialogue participate with a feeling of equality and collective creativity, and the attention is on what is said rather than who said what.

Religions meet in the confluence of cultures. The cultural centres which bring people together on special occasions or on the need to face certain common issues together create such cultural confluence. They create an exposure to others' beliefs and practices and initiate confidence building steps. Such steps may be meeting of poets, writers' meet, discussion of current issues and celebration of different feasts and festivals. Libraries and reading rooms attached to these Centres offer a healthy atmosphere for an open dialogue. Typical examples were the celebrations of Cochin (1981, 1991, 1996), of Kanyakumari of 1993. That the dialogue-initiatives come mostly from the Christian side may have, among others, this explanation that as a better organized and institutionalized community, we Christians are better placed for such initiatives. Here too there is a temptation to pass over in silence the important steps that those of other faiths took to build the bridges between different faith-communities. At the entrance-gate to the world Conference of Religions in Alwaye, Kerala, in 1924, Sree Narayana Guru, an Acharya in interfaith harmony had this slogan written in block characters: "Not to debate, not to defeat, but to know and let know". At the end of a three-days' Live-Together organized by the dialogue commission of the CBCI in Chavara Cultural Centre, Cochin, one of the Hindu partners — himself a participant in those inter-faith prayers in the Ashram of Gandhiji — told me that this inter-faith

live-in experiment took him back to the experience that he had with Gandhiji. Worth mentioning here is the World Conference of Religions organized by the Ayyappa Seva Sangham in Sasthamkotta, Kerala, India back in 1971. The bonds that we dialogue-partners made there became a chain knitting us together in love and hope.

Let me recall another encounter here. Immediately after the All Asian Consultation on Evangelization, Dialogue, and Development (1971) a group of Christian theologians visited Vinoba Bhave in his Ashram in Wardha. I recall a question put to him: What would be your message to us Christians working along with those of other faiths? His immediate comment was: You Christians can work along with those of other faiths in the field of politics, education, social concerns; but when it comes to a call to prayer you go the way as of a lathi-charge. Let me make a confession here. This note of caution or warning touched me deeply. In the steps that the commission took all through those years an effort was made to give importance to inter-faith prayers, songs and meditations. The letters from the participants in the inter-faith programmes confirm this that they were thankful to the inter-faith prayer communion that they experienced. Well, the Christian entry in and commitment to inter-faith dialogue is definitive; at the same time let us take note of the initiatives coming from other faith-communities and recognize therein signs of hope in this path.

Dialogue centres, Groups, Movements

Looking around, taking note of the on-going dialogues there are many signs of hope in this very delicate and difficult path. One of these is that of cultural centres. As one directly involved in the foundation and running of such centres, I see signs of hope in this path of dialogue. In the Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, India, I was a regular member and participant in the inter-faith encounters there. I had exposures at the sessions of Indian Philosophical Congress, of the Kerala Philosophical Congress (founded in 1968). Back in 1964 a few of us started in Bangalore monthly interfaith meetings — in different families — wherein a few of us of different faiths met regularly, with interfaith prayers and deliberations on topics of common concern. In and through such meets the bonds of friendship grew.

Religions meet in the confluence of cultures of cultural centres. They bring together peoples of different faiths in an exposure-exercise, in confidence-building steps. The steps may be poets' meets, writers' meets discussions on current concerns, inter-faith celebrations of different feasts and festivals. The libraries and reading rooms that are attached to these Centres offer to the guests a healthy, open atmosphere. This is all the more true for the "little ones" of this world who are financially unable to take membership in clubs and groups that are often reserved to the upper strata of society. In the open atmosphere that is thus created in and around these centres the stereo-types that inhibit believers of different faiths from opening out to others are slowly removed. Fears are dissolved. The partners in these dialogues grow up to appreciate not only the similarities, the common elements, but also the differences.

The educational institutions, hospitals and health care centres run by the different Christian churches are appreciated by those of other faiths. The cultural centres reach out to a wide range of seekers, seekers of hope, seekers of peace caught as they are in communal tension, suspicion, hatred and fears. Upasana the Cultural Centre of Thodupuzha is bringing people of different faiths together at least once every week. Most of those who frequent the library and reading room, who respond to the invitation to weekly meets are young people. The tenets of different faith-traditions are presented and discussed. Seeds of inter-faith harmony are sown in the very fertile ground of children in and through the meets of Balopasana — the children's wing of the cultural centre.

One may raise this question: are these meets, these cultural centres serving the cause of inter-religious dialogue? The answer will be 'yes' or 'no' depending on what one understands by the word dialogue. It would be 'no' if one limits dialogue to such meets where the concern is restricted to religious themes such as sacred scriptures, doctrines of faith, rituals etc. The meet of Theologians in Nagpur on dialogue, mission and development, described dialogue as any encounter of people of different faiths wherein the ultimate concern comes into play. If this description is accepted cultural centres mentioned above are very good models for inter-faith dialogues. In a context wherein there is a hidden fear that 'dialogues' are often prejudged as new techniques for

'proselytization' the cultural centres offer a free atmosphere for openness. There are many similar centres in India that carry on this *sangamam* — *confluence of cultures*. Equally important are the inter-faith groups that bring in partners of different faiths on a regular basis. Among Catholic Initiatives here are just a few: *Darsana, Kottayam; Santhome centre, Kanayakumari; Ashirbad, Bangalore; C. S. W. R., Bangalore; Divyodaya, Coimbatore; Inter-faith Group of Fransaliam Vidyaniketan, Khamgaon; Inter-faith group of Ajimer; Aikyalayam, Madras*. This list is by no means exhaustive even for Catholic entries.

There are many centres and groups that are organised by other Churches, by other faith-traditions. There is an ever-increasing net-working among these groups and centres. Caught as many are into the trap of falling into religious fanaticism in conflict situations these centres and groups give to the participants and partners a new sense of identity, of belonging to inter-faith fellowships. There is this sense of living across the boundaries without in any way compromising one's own faith tenets. These centres and groups become new catalysts trying out new creative ways of celebrating our focus on the not-yet, on the 'Kingdom of God', the values of the 'Kingdom'—through interfaith marches, inter-faith processions, searching for new symbols to celebrate the emerging sense of harmony. Dependence or Inter-dependence: This is all the more true when all of us pilgrims stand before the environment, celebrating the air, the water, the mother earth where we stand in awe and wonder with the commitment to keep the light burning, the hope of survival being alive. Here we celebrate our interdependence in our dependence on Nature. There is a simple song that was found so meaningful in inter-faith gatherings: "God is within me, God is above me, God is around me, God is with me. God is in the forest, God is in the moon-light, God is in the garden, God is in the house." This song was judged by a panel of judges to provide the best note to harmony at the end of an interfaith live-together in 1989, in the beautiful hill station of Ooty on "harmony and environment" surrounded as we were by hills that were denuded by us of all faiths!

What was noted about inter-faith centres and groups can be said also about many inter-faith conferences that are on the increase. The Centres of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, international assemblies of World conference of Religions for Peace-WCRP, of

International Association for Religious Freedom-IARF, World Congress of Faiths-WCF, Temple of Understanding-TU, United Religions' Initiative-URI have their membership groups in India. Based in Cochin, in Chavara Cultural Centre, is the World Fellowship of Inter-Religious Councils-WFIRC. This network of inter-faith initiatives was the follow-up to the World Conference of Religions of Cochin of 1981. WFIRC, in turn, organized three major inter-faith family meets on a world level in 1991, 1993, and 1996 and is committed to another World Inter-Faith event in 1999 December marking the dawn of the new Millennium with the focus on "Inter-Faith Harmony."

Gathering Momentum

The emphasis in this note was on the role played by inter-faith centres. These reflections did not touch the fears expressed by the onlookers: the fear of compromise, of syncretism, of watering down the 'uniqueness' of one's own faith, of substituting dialogue for the 'proclamation', of not entering the struggle for justice and freedom from different forms of alienation, of the failure to stem the tide of fundamentalism and fanaticism. These questions can be taken up and discussed in detail. There is no attempt here to justify all that goes on in the name of dialogue, especially the attempts that water down one's own commitment to the heritage of faith. I do believe that no one is in 'no man's land'. The experience that is mine is a confirmation for me that I cannot bracket my faith in the encounters with those of other faiths. As for the commitment to the struggles for human dignity and freedom, there is with me this feeling that these centres can become powerful agencies for change. In inter-faith contexts the participants will look for a new language meaningful to all the partners to be faithful to the different baggages of faith and to the confluence or "Sangam" that invites us. Let not these reflections give a sense of jubilation! Far from it. Rather these are just ripples from children gathering pebbles and scattering them again "on the seashore of endless worlds" to borrow a picture from Tagore. (Gitanjali: Chapter 60)

The Christian approach to Religious Pluralism

John B. Chethimattam

Today inter-religious dialogue is in crisis. Certain important issues have to be discussed such as the very concept of dialogue with other religions, the basic supposition and scope of dialogue, the method of approach and the ongoing objectives and outlook. In meeting these issues the traditional Indian method of interiority is very important. Language of dialogue should be sociology, psychology and other sciences of every day human experiences. The task of dialogue is to make every one an active partner in humanity's common effort to make this globe hospitable to all. All should appreciate our common heritage of the one religious history where every one, every religion has its place and relevance. Today no one can be an island and no theology can be done in isolation. The centre of a living communication among people of different faiths is the acute awareness of a living God.

Today inter-religious dialogue is at a dead end. In looking for the reason for this impasse one has to examine critically the concept of religion on which it was based and the approaches to dialogue itself. If one starts with the assumption that "in the New Testament there is one Jesus but many Christologies" and that it is the sole basis of Christian experience, one can only end up with one Christ and many religions, and dialogue will not have any scope! The issues we should discuss are: What is the basic supposition and scope of dialogue? What is the concept of religion we start with in going to dialogue with other religions? What method of approach do we adopt? What is its ongoing objective and task?

The Basic Supposition and Scope: The scope of dialogue is not to call into question one's own faith or that of the partner, but to be present to each other in the experience of faith, which is God's free gift to all his children. First of all, therefore, any dialogue should leave intact the identity and integrity of each partner. Christianity was an experiential religion and not a

philosophy nor a religion of the book. It did not start with any mystical experience but with the realization of the disciples especially after the Resurrection that their Master was not an ordinary rabbi, but the one Son of God who definitively entered human history as Jesus of Nazareth. Peter realized that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of the living God taught by the Father. Paul came to faith in the Risen Christ not taught by any body but through personal encounter with him on the road to Damascus. Thomas touching the body of the risen Jesus confessed him as Lord and God. John writes about "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands about the Word of life" (1 Jn. 1: 1). But it was not a purely subjective experience but one with a definite content that formed a clear kerygma. As Martin Hengel states basing himself on the first document of the New Testament, Paul's 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians, Christian faith in Jesus has remained constant from the very first decade after his death and resurrection down the centuries, and if there was evolution in it, it was more in the first twenty years than in the rest of the twenty centuries. Growth, of course, there was. Similarly other religions too have maintained their identities. A meaningful and fruitful dialogue among people of different faiths can be had only by accepting the honesty and good faith of the partners.

Man, not God, should be the Starting Point

The present situation of the conflict of religions started in the Axial period between 900 and 200 BCE when sophisticated metaphysical thinking was applied to defining the Deity and there emerged radically different conceptions of the Godhead. Even today this misunderstanding continues, since it is often assumed¹ that "many religions are born from people's pluriform experience of the Absolute", or as S. J. Samartha puts it, "religious pluralism is the fact that different religions respond to the Mystery of Ultimate Reality or *Sat* or *Theos* in different ways".² Buddhism long ago exploded this human pretension of grasping the essence of God and condemned all discussion of God as an existential heresy, and Asoka gave the basic principle of approach to other religions,

1: ITA statement, 1996, n.6

2: See S. J. Samartha; *One Christ Many Religions*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991, p. 4

that by respecting other religions one brought honour to one's own religion because they are dimensions of one's own faith. Even Jainism's attempt to bring together the imperfect experiences of many religions into a big religion could not satisfy people of other religions who considered their faith an integral way to salvation! Religion, though it deals with God, is rather about the human, the ultimate meaning of his/her existence, the meaning of God for him/her. Today the question is how Asoka's principle of mutual respect and tolerance among religions can be carried out in our post-colonial India.

Western Pre-occupations in Inter-religious Dialogue

As J. A. Dinoia O. P. states, "although the Second Vatican Council was itself a watershed in the history of the Catholic Christian community's relations with other religious communities, theological debate in this area had something of a slow start".³ The primary concern of Western theologians was for allowing the possibility of salvation in other religions. Rejecting the traditional exclusivism which held that salvation required explicit faith in Christ prior to death, some like Karl Rahner and Jacques Dupuis embrace inclusivism and others like John Hick and Paul Knitter advocate pluralism. Inclusivists tend to think that all religious communities implicitly aim at the salvation, which the Christian community most adequately commends, while pluralists maintain that all religious communities aim at salvation under a variety of tradition-specific descriptions.⁴ The concern of both groups is to explain away the old formula *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, that outside the Church there is no salvation. Jacques Dupuis and Gavin D'Costa convincingly argue that this formula referred only to those who had left the Church and not to those who were never its members. Still the central concern remains focused on the availability of salvation beyond the confines of the Christian community. The exclusivism-inclusivism-pluralism typology has been recently just a bit expanded by the addition of ecclesiocentrism, christo-centrism and theocentrism, namely church-centred, Christ-centred and God-centred conceptions of salvation. But this typology is generally considered irrelevant especially when ecclesiocentrism is combined with exclusivism, christocentrism

3. *The Diversity of Religions, A Christian Perspective*. Washington D. C., The Cath; University Press, p. 178

4. cf. *Ibid.*, p. ix

with inclusivism and theocentrism with pluralism.⁵ David Tracy recently remarked: "The new question is to find a way to formulate a Christian theological question on religious pluralism in such a manner that a genuinely new answer may be forthcoming without abandoning Christian identity".⁶ According to him shifting from a christocentric to a theocentric position is not the answer since in all Christian models of theocentrism the decisive revelation of God is in Jesus Christ.⁷

The basic problem with Western approaches to religion still is that they are mostly salvation-centered, though some do question the cross-religious applicability of the category of salvation.⁸ All religions are considered to be 'ways of salvation', guidelines to escape from the present abnormal state of sin and suffering in this world and to reach final immutable state of peace and happiness. Though the extreme form of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is generally rejected, some form of inclusivism is defended by most Christian theologians who have to affirm that once the Son of God entered human history as Jesus of Nazareth, that history radically changed and came under his lordship, and that only through him salvation of humanity can be accomplished. The most famous in this is Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christian" theory, that all people of good faith in all religions are crypto-Christians!⁹ Even Jacques Dupuis in his *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, states criticizing pluralism: "An inclusive, open christocentrism remains possible and indeed represents the only way available to a Christian theology of religions truly worthy of the name".¹⁰ In order to explain the sources of religious truth in other religions and to present a "theology of non-biblical Scriptures Dupuis is willing to de-particularize" Christian revelation, and pose "an ecclesiological de-centering and christological re-centering of

5. cf. J. Peter Schineller, "Christ and Church: A Spectrum of Views", *Theological Studies* 37 [1976] 545-66; Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*. Mary Knoll: Orbis, 1991, pp. 104-10

6. David Tracy, *Dialogue with the other*. Louvain: Peters Press, Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1990, pp. 96-97

7. Ibid., p. 97.

8. cf. E. g. Willard G. Oxtoby, "Reflections on the Idea of Salvation", *Man and His Salvation*, ed. E. J. Sharpe and J. R. Hinnells, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973, pp. 7-37; and Douglas Davies, 'The Notion of Salvation in the Comparative Study of Religions', *Religion*. 8 [1978]. 85-100

9. cf. *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, 115-34; vol. 6, 390-98; vol. 14, 280-94; vol. 17, 38-50

10. Mary Knoll: Orbis, 1991, p. 108

theology of religions''. After all, God's revelation in Jesus Christ is the culmination of the divine self-disclosure beginning with creation and continuing through the manifestation of the Divine Providence in the histories of all peoples and religions.

Even the so called pluralists avoid inclusivism only by giving a broader interpretation to the word 'Incarnation'. According to them, since it would not be possible for the divine Logos to really 'become' a human being, incarnation is just mythic language that gives salvific meaning to humanity's efforts to raise itself to the divine level. In that way all religions are ways of salvation. Raimundo Panikkar in his many writings has argued that Jesus of Nazareth was only one form of the Divine Logos manifesting himself as Saviour and that it is the same Logos that presents the theandric combination in all religions as the focus of salvation. He explains this not only in his *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, but especially in his "The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness", an essay included in the *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*.¹¹ The same type of inclusivist pluralism is found in Kenneth Cragg¹² and S. J. Samartha.¹³ A similar pluralism is defended by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, though he gives special emphasis to personal faith over historical identities of religious communities in the way of an Islamic theology of religions.¹⁴

Some like George A. Lindbeck,¹⁵ and J. A. Dinoia¹⁶ want to preserve the particularity of Christianity and of other religions. They start with the assumption that the different religions are not saying the same thing, but propose radically different goals to human life. But they escape the pluralist denial of the unity of the divine economy of salvation by ascribing to religions a providential role in the salvation of humanity, without, however, entering

11. Ed. John Hick and Paul F. Knitter. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987

12. *The Christ and the Faiths*; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986

13. *One Christ, Many Religions*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991

14. *Towards a World Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981; see also Smith's article "Idolatry in Comparative Perspective" in the *Myth of Christian Uniqueness*; ed.. Hick and Knitter, pp. 53-68

15. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984

16. *The Diversity of Religions, A Christian Perspective*

into the question of their truth or validity. "The providential role of non-Christian religions will be fully revealed only when the divine plan has been consummated."¹⁷ The patterns of life commended by them may be comprehensive "in the sense that they give shape to life as a whole in the light of an ultimate aim of life." The Christian doctrine that God wills the salvation of all peoples supposes that "non-Christians could benefit concretely from God's will to save them even when they do not explicitly acknowledge him or his loving mercy in their regard."¹⁸ Ascription of a prospective fellowship with them does not require a Christian valuation of their present religious and moral dispositions and conduct. Rather than asking whether non-Christians attain salvation or whether their religions aim at salvation the question to be asked is: "How do the soteriological programmes of other religions promote the pursuit and enjoyment of the distinctive overall aim they propose for human life."¹⁹

But the important point is that this emphasis on soteriology is a wrong starting point to understand religions. Judaism itself did not evince much concern about after-life. Religion for the Hebrews was a communitarian covenant with their God, and the benefit of observing the conditions of that treaty was mostly temporal. If religion is simply the search for some one who can liberate us from the situation, it is a selfish and individualist pursuit that instrumentalizes God as a sort of supreme 'office-boy' to bring us the goodies we need or want. Though search for some one out there for help may start from the actual situation of one caught between the possibility of extinction from inimical powers and the alternative of survival, what dominates religion as a phenomenon is the encounter with an awesome and at the same time fascinating Mystery. The only source of diversity of religious experience is the different ways the actual problem is perceived and the specific method of approach that is chosen. For Indians who started with the problem of human suffering the method was a search for the authentic, genuine and infinite over against the emptiness of all phenomenal things. Knowledge and realization of that One-alone-without-a-second was the goal of religion. Hebrews fighting against the threat of evil and inimical forces

17. J. Doinio O. P., *The Diversity of Religions*, p. 74

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74

19. *Ibid.*, p. 55

in the wilderness defined their God as Yahweh, the One who really is, the Creator of heaven and earth. Greeks baffled by the flux and multiplicity of things placed the highest religious activity in the exercise of the human intellect in contemplating the supreme Good and Truth that could not have any change or evil or untruth. From this it is clear that the whole human concern about salvation, redemption, liberation, expiation, and the like was only an after-thought after encountering the One really Real. So what unites all religions is a common search for the existential questions of human life.

One can easily see that the approach of Vatican II to religious pluralism is an application of the Asokan principle. In the *Nostra aetate*²⁰ reflecting on "what men have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them," it states that all human beings form one community since they stem from the one stock which God created to people the earth. What unites them all is the concern with the riddles of human existence looking for answers for them from their different religions. Here naturally there is scope for a variety of contributions: "Awareness of a hidden power behind the course of nature and the events of human life" sometimes recognized as a supreme Being, even as a Father, is only part of the answer. Only Hinduism seems to follow the traditional idea of religion, concentrating on the divine mystery and seeking liberation through asceticism and meditation. Buddhism emphasizes the emptiness of the world and shows the path to illumination. Muslims submit themselves to the decrees of God. Judaism stressed the self-disclosure of God in human history. Other religions attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of people by outlining a programme of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites. Of course, there may be flaws in the formulation of this faith and failure to live up to one's ideals as exemplified in the case of the Jews, and there is scope for criticism. Our dialogue with other religions should include the dialectics of self-criticism and mutual criticism. But it is wrong to imagine that mystical experience or the Vedantic realization of the One-alone-without-a-second is the ideal and norm of all religions. Mysticism which in itself is a great thing, is rather the root of religion than its fruit and culmination, since religion

20. *Nostra Aetate*, nn. 2-4

demands that one goes out with that experience to make this world God's Kingdom.

The relevance of these religions for Christianity is that in the Christian faith perspective there is only one divine economy of salvation for all human beings and to it belong all religions. People of these different faiths and even those who have no faith are in some manner related to Christ, the one Son of God who through the Incarnation is part of the one religious history of humanity and belongs to all.²¹ Since he is also the creative logos, through him alone can creation reach back to the Creator. This approach is faithful to the Christian self-understanding maintained down the centuries and in no way tampers with the self-understanding of other religions. As they do not define themselves as rivals to Christianity, the Church should not conceive its mission in rivalry with others but in collaboration with them. Presenting Christ as the common heritage of all human beings just like Mohammed and Budha is in no way colonialism.

We Should not Be Strangers in Our Own Country

But is not the real problem the approach to dialogue itself? We are still stuck in the Greek problematic and bound by its methodology. A great deal of misunderstanding has been caused by imposing the Graeco-Western conceptualist pattern developed down the centuries to interpret Christianity as a response to the ontological problems of multiplicity and flux, on other religions born in radically different cultural contexts and struggling with other problems. The present controversy about "Theocentric Christology" proposed against a "Christomonism" shows the unnecessary contradictions which a purely propositional theology can run into. As Masau Abe says Christianity's great mistake was to think of God as supreme Being and make him an excuse for conquest of the world spawning imperialism, apartheid and the rest. Exclusivism, and inclusivism spelt out in religion the imperialist principle, we are right and they are wrong. Pluralism is just its obverse side: If we cannot dominate them we have nothing to do with them! In India the common problem for all humanity and all religions is suffering and its cause, and the only way it can be approached is from the depth of contentless consciousness, the divine womb from which all things emerged.

21. *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 15 and 16

When Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was in the Alipore jail in his political struggle against the British, Bhasker Ghole is said to have advised him: You cannot gain Indian independence with Western methods. Kill your mind and let the Lord speak and act in and through you. Sri Ramana Maharshi told those who flocked to hear him: Kill your mind. Let your inner Self speak in you. Even a rationalist like Pandit Jawharlal Nehru concluded his Azad lecture at Santi Niketan in 1959 with this sentence: "In considering these economic aspects of our problems we have always to remember the basic approach of peaceful means, and perhaps we might also keep in view the old Vedantic ideal of the life force which is the inner base of everything that exists." Without in any way changing the content of our faith and the centrality and uniqueness of Jesus in human salvation we have to adopt the Indian methodology of interiority and face squarely the problems of hunger, poverty and exploitation.

Here the language is no longer metaphysics, neither Aristotle nor Sankara. In fact, from the beginning sociology was the language of religion. According to Durkheim religion was initially a transfiguration of society and expressed itself as totemism and animism, a sort of fellowship with all beings. Society provided the concept of hierarchy which led to the First Cause. Malinowski held that the mainstay of religion was myth and ritual with the practical scope of maintaining the stability of society through pious obedience to moral imperatives against the forces of evil. For Judaism, Christianity and Islam, each of them born under the domination of a foreign culture, naturally judged as the personification of evil, faith was an ideology to be preserved at all costs, and to be imposed on all with a militant approach. Every religion was militant at one time or another in its history. Asoka replaced his lust for political conquest with his enterprise of Dharmavijaya and for almost a millennium Buddhism was the religion of India, until under the Hindu kings Buddhism was wiped out of its birth place.

In the present universal concern with the problem of suffering the Indian sociology of generosity, according to which all classes and castes receive their talents and mission from the same underlying divine principle can be a language of mutual discourse among various religions. Hinduism finds the path to *nisreyasa* in the mutuality of classes in the maintenance of Dharma. Buddhism

seeks liberation in the context of the *samgha*, a hierarchy of progress from the ordinary seeker to the final freedom of the buddha. Jainism finds liberation in the same social context through personal development in thirteen stages. Judaism and Islam show that only by entering deeper into the bosom of the *kahal* or *umma* one can get closer to God and salvation. Christianity presents the whole human race as one pilgrim community whose march to the Kingdom is made effective by the entry into its history of the one Son of God as Jesus of Nazareth inviting all to become sons and daughters of the Father.

Exclusive claims, distinctive features, foreign symbolism, rituals and practices of the different religions do not constitute any obstacle to dialogue. As Nehru says they are all welcome, since "synthesis was the secret of the Indian tradition and India's survival through history". Only that one has to approach them all with the interioristic outlook taking them all as expressions of the one inexpressible mystery. Though dialogue should not ignore or hush up our differences, the emphasis should be on what we can do together. Our common heritage of the one religious history is not something to be fought over, but rather to be recognized and enjoyed by all. The only question is what each tradition can contribute best to the solution of our common problems.

Dialogue an Ongoing Process

No religion is a static product but an ongoing process moving with the flow of time. Hence what is needed is an ongoing research into the process of dialogue itself. But there is quantitative research that produces raw data suitable for statistical analysis, and qualitative research which pays special attention to what is central and substantive to religion. We have tons of raw data thrown before us from the personal experiences of participants in our various dialogue programmes but rather very little focus on what is really significant and crucial for religious faith. Research itself implies five distinct stages. First there is *basic* or *pure* research that seeks to find new knowledge as an end in itself. Then there is *applied* research where the purpose is to find the religious under-currents of people's actions and of social events. A third stage is *assessment* based on knowledge from basic and applied research seeking to determine the potential usefulness of a religious idea or ideal. A fourth stage of research is *strategy*

which is an attempt to decide what policies can help different religious groups to come together and work together to make our world God's Kingdom. A fifth stage is *evaluation* making a critical examination of the results of our encounter with other religions and what changes are needed in our approach. Is not a lack of consciousness of these various components of research in our inter-religious encounter that keeps our dialogue centres stuck at the initial stage where they started some twenty five years ago?

The Achilles heel of our interreligious dialogue is the original source of all religious wars, the supposition that it is all about God, his nature and attributes, and that one's idea of the Deity is superior to that of others. So some assign a superior place to mystical experience and think of other religious concerns as of a lower grade. But as Aquinas stated breaking away clearly from the tradition of Peter Lombard, religion is about the coming forth of creatures from God and their return to him as their final destiny. Among the basic problems that affect humanity suffering and its causes have universal importance. In meeting these issues the traditional Indian method of interiority, viewing all things from the contentless consciousness of the Divine has great importance. Language of dialogue is no longer metaphysics but sociology, psychology and other sciences of everyday human experience. The task of dialogue is not to argue out our differences on the metaphysical plane, but to make everyone an active partner in humanity's common effort to make this globe our common home hospitable to all its members. When all can appreciate our common heritage of the one religious history we can transform our world into God's Kingdom and achieve the goal of our common pilgrimage to eternity. Finally our dialogue has to be organized systematically so that we gain from them not merely new knowledge about other religions but also get a deeper insight into their religious significance. In this we have to gather data, apply them to crucial daily events in our national life, assess the relative value of each idea and programme, formulate strategies for bringing people of all faiths to join our common effort and critically examine our own programmes whether they yield results proportionate to our efforts and expectations. Today we cannot do theology in isolation, lest we should end up speaking a language intelligible at best only to 2.5% of our population. True Christian theology

can be done only in dialogue with people of other religious traditions who form an integral part of the one divine economy of human salvation.

Self-Criticism the Point of Departure

As long as people remain with an attitude of exclusivism or inclusivism or pluralism, there is no reason for dialogue: If I am right and all others wrong, or if all that is positive in their teachings is included in mine, I have nothing to gain from talking to them. Similarly if different religions are parallel paths, equally valid and equally salvific, they will never meet. What encourages dialogue is the realization that in the one divine economy of human salvation the different religions have distinctive contributions to make in finding answers to the existential questions of human life by interpreting the divine gift of faith in the given concrete situation. One has to become aware of the defensive sociological mechanism each religion employed at its origin for the sake of survival. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all born under the domination of foreign cultures had to assume the garb of a secret wisdom directly communicated by divine revelation to claim that it could be understood only by those who were initiated into the new religion. Similarly each of them had to assume a militant mission to impose their understanding of eternal truth on everyone else. Each of them eventually came to appeal to the authority of a sacred Book as the source of their religious authority. But these are sociological accidents which had no authentic religious value.

In fact, Christianity introduces very little of doctrine, except the person of Jesus, the unique Son of God and his redemptive work, that is not actually in one way or another in other religions as well. As for the content of the Old Testament, Biblical scholars generally agree that regarding the story of creation of the first parents from clay by the hand of a divine being, their life in paradise, temptation by the serpent, and eventual fall, the Jahwist author of the Genesis tradition drew heavily on ancient Near Eastern myths for most of the external features of the narrative and that their symbolism is quite obvious. John L. McKenzie concludes: "The presence of these external descriptive and symbolic features makes it difficult to accept the hypothesis that the Hebrews enjoyed a divine revelation of the fall of man, since it is unlikely that these

somewhat common mythological traits would be contained in a direct divine revelation. It is also difficult to retain the older view that the story was preserved by tradition from the first generation of humankind, since the age of man is known to be much greater than the time during which traditions could be preserved even substantially".²² Even the testimony of the divinely inspired sacred writers and the centuries long Tradition of the Christian community are not absolutes. They need to be interpreted according to their text and context, and the various historical vicissitudes through which they have come down to us. Their relevance is to enable us to respond in faith and personally encounter Christ and the Spirit. One's 'ultimate concern' is one's God. So Scripture and Tradition are valuable not as oracles, but as guides leading us to meet God in our life. "Exodus and Resurrection: transforming pain and suffering identify the primary biblical events and ethical norm by which Christians live, and suggest a relationship with Scripture that is modelled on friendship rather than parental authority"²³

The Dialogical Perspective of the Christian Message

If we look at the Biblical message itself it is not given against any particular religious tradition of the times, but in actual dialogue with the mentality and attitudes of the people in general. A typical example is St. Luke's description of the commissioning of seventy two disciples to go to the various cities of Galilee and Samaria for a first announcement of the Kingdom being inaugurated. Jesus, after having told the crowds what it would cost them to join his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, tells the seventy two who are sent: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go your way. I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Whenever you enter a town ... heal the sick in it and say to them: 'The Kingdom of God has come near you.'" (cf Lk 10: 1-20). As Paul S. Minear explains,²⁴ there are several distinctive

22. John L. McKenzie S. J., *Dictionary of the Bible*, "Fall, the", New York: The Bruce Publ. Co., 1965, p. 272

23. Gary David Comstock, *Gay Theology without Apology*, Cleveland, Ohio: the Pirgrim Press, 1993, p. 6

24. Paul S. Minear. *To Heal and to Reveal: The Prophetic Vocation according to Luke*, New York: Seabury Press, A Crossroad Book, 1976, pp. 8-15

features of this narrative showing "a possible world and a possible way of orienting oneself in it."

First of all a central role is ascribed to God who is accessible to all through prayer. He is the owner and master of the harvest, who can choose the reapers and will be the final judge of the harvest. His active, though invisible presence is available to the disciples and the meaning of their mission will derive from their bond with him. Secondly the text assumes that God's Kingdom is set in motion in a decisive manner with regard to these cities and the future fate of these cities is said to depend on their acceptance of the messengers thus sent. Thirdly it is apparent that Jesus as Messiah and Son of God incarnate is the Lord of history and has received authority to speak as God's agent and also sufficient authority over the messengers to give them instructions on where to go, how to travel, and what to say. Fourthly the text supposes that it is not a world receptive of God's Kingdom, but rather a pack of wolves into whose midst the disciples are sent like lambs. The very message is supposed to create danger and invite rejection. The analogies of Sodom, Tyre and Sidon imply the alien character of the world into which the disciples are sent.

The fifth point which forms the core of the whole message is the future of humanity indicated by the term 'heaven'. Luke inherited the use of 'heaven' from the Old Testament. The height of the sky above the earth suggested the transcendence of God, its all-covering appearance indicated his nearness. It is a "space" or condition of happiness from which Satan was expelled. Though it is invisible, and requires special eyes to see it, its invisible reality is so important as to decide the meaning of life here on earth. Sixthly there is the pivotal role of the Holy Spirit, who is the source of Jesus' power, his joy and knowledge. This Spirit discloses to the messengers things long hidden from prophets and kings. The seventh point in the discourse is the ongoing conflict with the forces of evil. Satan's original defeat and expulsion from heaven is a promise and a guaranty of the success of the Kingdom. Finally the functions of the messengers are clearly indicated. They are to expel the demons, heal the sick and communicate wisdom which was not available even to prophets.

Christianity is not a philosophical system, nor a book of wisdom, but a living message centred in a living person, Jesus, the Son of God whose life, work and continued presence are the common heritage of all human beings. It can be communicated by living prophecy which comes from the absolutely primordial experience of revelation. So the centre of a living communication among people of different faiths is the acute awareness of the presence of a living God as the prime determiner of humanity's common destiny. The totality and radicality of the prophetic message is the announcement of a new world coming. So St. Paul was able to say: "Dying behold, we live" (2 Cor. 6: 9). The Christian contribution to the encounter of religions is the witness to an encounter with a new age: With the entry of the Son of God into our history, the world is not the same any more. All human beings irrespective of their race, culture and philosophy are called to be sons and daughters in the Only begotten!

Culture the Medium of Dialogue

A great obstacle to communication among different religions on the Indian sub-continent is the radical diversity of cultures behind the different religions. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism have the Indian religio-cultural background while Islam has inherited the Arabian tribal culture. Christianity started with the Palestinian culture of Judaism, then shifted to the Graeco-Roman culture of the West and embraced also the diverse cultures of Syria, Ethiopia and other countries. There is no religion except as concretely expressed in a definite culture. Culture itself is defined as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings, embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about things and attitudes towards life".²⁵ Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action.

Jesus and Paul came up with radically different approaches to this conflict of cultures of religions. Jesus said that new wine had to be put in new wine-bottles. He constantly challenged the Jewish leaders whenever they tried to absolutize the cultural forms

25. Clifford Geertz, *Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture*: New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 89

that went counter to the Messianic Kingdom which was breaking in on them. The new wine of the Gospel could not be contained within the old cultural structures. It broke these obsolete human frameworks and declared that a God who is spirit could not be tied down to the senescent traditions of Jerusalem and Mount Garisim. He had to be worshipped in spirit and truth.

Paul on the other hand held that the essentials of salvation and the essence of the Gospel could adapt themselves to all cultures. Jews and Gentiles, Scythians and Greeks, masters and slaves, male and female all could attain God's grace made available to them. In the rich diversity of the cultural expressions Paul became a Greek to the Greeks and a law observing Jew for the Jews. In dealing with people of different cultures Samaritans, Greeks, and Syro-Phoenicians Jesus did not try to impose on them Jewish patterns. He directly spoke to the inherent problem in these cultures, the fallenness of human nature, sin, error and disobedience and called all to repentance: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand".

The rise and expansion of Christianity stated in cultural terms focus first on the personality of Jesus, the Prophet who along with John the Baptist announces a total overhauling of Judaic culture. Then there was the homeless life-style of the Greek Cynics embraced by both Jesus and his disciples. There were, besides, good many Essenian communities in many parts of Palestine who were looking forward to a reform of Israel. As Don M. McCurry states: "The work of Christ was both to judge and redeem, to prune and transform. He never sought to enforce structural uniformity. He sought to forgive and transform both individuals and their societies".²⁶

As long as the Church remained within a single culture, encounter with other religious cultures was simple enough. It had only to call into question those aspects of other religious cultures which came into conflict with the Gospel. But when Christianity itself was expressed in radically different cultures greater care had to be exercised in the translation of faith elements into divergent cultures. Even with the simple translation of the Gospel into different languages, these languages put the world

26. "A Time for New Beginnings" *The Gospel and Islam, A Compendium* ed., Don M. McCurry, Monrovia, CA, Mrc, 1979: p. 16

often in radically different forms. Even the word "God" does not mean the same thing in different languages. Different cultures have differing world-views. So culturally encountering another religion is to question what one had till then thought to be the only right way to view the world. When the Roman empire made Christianity the state religion followers of earlier religions were branded "pagans" the uncivilized. If culture is all one's learned pattern of behaviour in encountering another culture one is forced to distinguish the essence of one's faith from the rest of the cultural baggage. Besides, Gospel itself can be explained to the other only in cultural forms of language, symbol and ritual. The Gospel is also bound to question whatever appears wrong and sinful in the other's culture. But this critical approach is valid only after one steps into the other's shoes and views the world through his eyes. This means that the Christian has first to undergo a cultural conversion before he can invite the other to share his faith experience and world vision.

Cross-Cultural Communication

It is, however, practically impossible to bring all religions involved in inter-religious dialogue into one single cultural medium. Islam and Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism for example are all rooted in radically different cultures. The Indian solution to this conflict of cultures is the basic cultural attitude of Pancasila, the fivefold virtues of Truth, non-grabbing, non-stealing, chastity and non-violence. Truth is common to all, the ultimate norm that judges the authenticity of one's faith and world view. Non-acceptance of gifts, and non-stealing establish the practice of justice. Chastity brings self-discipline in all one's behaviour. Non-violence which is the most comprehensive virtue means not only avoidance of violence in all its forms, but also tolerance, respect and love for the other. With these basic attitudes, the diversity of traditions, practices and customs can harmoniously coexist in a society. These virtues provide the mental tranquillity to examine impartially the other's religious message, without bracketting one's own faith. As Donald N. Larson says, "Passing into one another's world takes time. It requires great attentiveness to differences of language as experiences are compared. At first each can talk only about what he knows and he has experience in his own terms. But gradually, as each begins to sense the way the

other experiences things, each is able to use the other's words to talk about his own experience."²⁷

Even conversion from one religion to another is a slow cultural growth and transformation. European missionaries under the cultural influence of Western individualism and pietism talked about conversion as leading to God a single individual soul from sin, error and ignorance. Protestantism itself was a revolt from the community of the Church declaring each one capable of interpreting Scripture by oneself; with the Industrial revolution and the consequent laissez-faire attitude permitting each one unlimited freedom to accumulate wealth, the individual was farther detached from society and its culture. This individualism was further reinforced by Puritan moralism and Max Weber's Protestant Ethic. The end result was that conversion was reduced to merely an act of repentance and faith isolated from categories like sanctification, fellowship in the believing community and commitment to an active communication to others of the message of salvation. Hence was lost the sense of conversion as a comprehensive designation for the entire renewal and transformation of man and of a sign of the kingdom in Christ to which one is grafted, as the process of the change of virtue (Eph. 4: 24; Col. 3: 9-10) and as a metamorphosis taking place over a period of time (Rom. 12: 1-2).²⁸

What is crucial, however, in this dialogue of religions is contextualization. The discussion does not remain exclusively on the cultural dimension of human experiences, intelligible and relevant concepts and symbols, but recognizes the importance of the human context which religions address, including the social, political and economic questions, wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness, privilege and oppression. Culture itself is not taken in a static sense but in flexibility and changeableness. We live in a world of explosive change, to which a static idea of culture is not relevant. Sociological systems are not closed. Today groups and societies relate to each other, trade with each other, compete with each other. Further in each culture there is the

27. The Gospel and Islam. "The Cross-Cultural Communication of the Gospel to the Muslims", p. 42.

28. Cf. Harvie M. Conn, "The Muslim Convert and His Culture", *The Gospel and Islam*, pp. 65-66.

demonic as well as the divine, and there are cultural confrontations and syncretism even within the culture of a single religion.

So the way religions can meet in such a complexity of ideologies and cultures is to take the specific context they all have in common and ask what and how each of the many religions, which are the common heritage of all humans can contribute to resolve the problems and the total well-being of all people.

C. M. I. Dharmaniketan
Behala
Calcutta — 700 034

Book Reviews

K. T. Sebastian, *THE ERA OF THE LAY PEOPLE*, Bombay: Pauline Publications, 1998, pp. xx+138, Price: Rs. 83.

There are very few books on the theology of the laity, and most of them are written by the clergy or the religious. This book, *The Era of the Lay People*, is an exception. It is a book on the theology of the laity (laicology) written by a lay man. Prof. K. T. Sebastian is the author of the book. He is a well known lay theologian of India. He was the first Indian to be nominated to the Pontifical Council for the Laity. He writes from his vast experience and involvement in the various commissions of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), especially, in the Commission for the Laity and the National Advisory Council to the CBCI, recently renamed Catholic Council of India (CCI).

The book highlights the new vision and understanding of the laity and their positive and active role in the Church and the world in the light of the new ecclesiology of Vatican II and based on several post-conciliar documents, especially, of 1987 Synod on the Laity. The book is divided into 14 chapters. The first chapter introduces the theology of the laity highlighting the emergence of a new era of the laity and the need for their formation. Chapter two gives a brief historical survey of the position of the laity in the Church. The early Church was one community of equals and every member of the Church proclaimed the Gospel. The separation of clergy and the laity was a later historical development along the Roman imperial model of the rulers and the subjects. In our own time the concept of the Church as one communion, as one People of God has been rediscovered. Chapters three and four deal with laicology in relation to ecclesiology. He calls traditional ecclesiology as "Christomonistic ecclesiology" and the contemporary ecclesiology as "Pneumatological ecclesiology". In the former the laity receives every thing from the hierarchy who represents Christ. In the latter the working of the Spirit in the whole community through various charisms is emphasized. If the Church is a communion, there can be no Church without a

community of believers, and there is no community of believers without the laity who constitute its vast majority.

Chapters five and six discuss the collaboration between the ordained ministries and the lay ministries. This collaboration is not a participation of the laity in the specific apostolate of the hierarchy, not lay person becoming a "mini priest", but both sharing in the saving mission of the Church which calls for partnership of clergy and the laity. Chapters seven, eight and eleven explain the specific mission of the laity and their rights and obligations. Their specific mission is to be a catalytic force in the world, to bear witness to Christ and the Gospel, to promote the Kingdom of God in the midst of the world where they live and work through various secular professions. Chapter nine presents the model of a "people's Church" which was the tradition of the ancient Church of St. Thomas in Malabar. In the *Palliyogam* (Local Assembly) and in the *Malankara Sabha Yogam* (National Assembly), the entire people of God functioned as one body without any domination of the clergy over the laity. According to the author, the post-Vatican structures such as the parish council and the diocesan pastoral council are merely shadows of what the *Palliyogam* was in the past (p. 90). Chapter ten outlines the characteristics of lay spirituality.

Chapter twelve summarizes the findings of the 1987 Synod on the Laity and of its final outcome, the Papal Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*. Chapter thirteen presents the post-Vatican structures for lay participation, such as Parish Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council, Catholic Council of India, National Laity Council and the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Chapter fourteen (Epilogue) is a forward look at the Church which prepares for the third millennium by the events of the Asian Synod and the *Yesu Krist Jayanthi 2000*. The author concludes with the hope that "the Church of the New Millennium will be a 'Church of the Laity', in the sense that their dignity and equality in the Church will be restored, and that they will have full partnership in the mission and ministry of the Church" (p. 138).

Prof. K. T. Sebastian deserves our congratulations for this valuable and timely book on the theology of the laity. The book can inspire the laity and awaken them to take their rightful place in the Church. If the laity, the 99% of the members of the Church,

wake up and utilize their talents and potential for the mission of the Church, the face of the Church will be totally renewed and the Church will become a major force in the third millennium.

Kuncheria Pathil

Raimon Panikkar, *THE COSMO THEANDRIC EXPERIENCE, EMERGING RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS*, ed. with Introd. by Scott Eastham, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993.

We live in a multireligious world, wracked by conflict, split by barriers of religious traditions and divergent world views. Any unity imposed from the outside will not work. There are no cultural universals. Raimon Panikkar from his multireligious and multicultural experience argues that one has to have a deeper understanding of one's own tradition and at the same time reach out to stand under (= under stand) another horizon. In the day to day encounter each one has with competing world views, the nexus is the human person, the living crucible of the encounter between cultures, religions and values.

The "Cosmotheandric Experience" is an interdisciplinary study. What the author says in this book is more or less what he has stated repeatedly in ever different ways in his more than 30 books and 300 essays, namely "that the divine, the human and the earthly are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute the real, in fact every spark of the real!" No religious culture or fragment of reality should be forgotten or neglected.

"Man has the same origin as the cosmos, the same source, the very power of the divine which stirred at the beginning." The three co-exist at the beginning before the "Many". The fall comes at a second stage. In the resultant historical situation of Man, there is a desire to be God. In God there is a parallel love for Man and the world. They all have the same origin, everything is related, the entire universe is a family, a macro organism. The task is to re-member the dismembered, to make it whole. This is salvation.

"Modern Man increasingly senses that the centre is neither a merely transcendent Godhead, nor the cosmos nor himself. He attempts to project this centre into the future as the first symbol

of transcendence and, in point of fact, all the futuristic utopias common to our times are signs of this search" (p. 46).

In this pilgrimage the author finds three chairiological moments. The first is the ecstatic moment of intelligence, when Man knows; the second is the ecstatic moment of human intelligence: Man knows that he knows. The third is the Catholic moment, the "ontonomic" order which will take into account the overall contours of the problem without ignoring the fundamental exigencies of regional ontologies. For this one has to go beyond all dualities, go deeper into a time "before the world was formed". Here Panikkar refers to the books of Rene Guenon, who with his gnostic orientation has remained in disrepute. The point seems to be that only from a mystical point of view, from the perspective of Divine Wisdom can all the problems be really solved. This is what all mystics Eckhart and Teresa of Avila and others have maintained. Panikkar, however, introduces a different note: Here instead of placing the centre in God one has to strike a balance whereby the three dimensions find their centre each moment in the free interplay among them. Here comes the interplay of world's religions. For Buddhism the focus is Nirvana. Even in the Hindu Vedanta Brahman is the ultimate subject of avidya (ignorance). Wisdom is not seeing this world as unreal, but seeing it as the veil put on the one Real.

What Panikkar is saying is that mystical vision is the unifying point of all religions and the one point from which all human problems can be resolved. But the question remains whether this is not rather root of religion, its healthy starting point than its fruit and ultimate end and goal. Is the task of religion to make us enter into the quiet of divine wisdom, or rather to challenge us to make human life and the world God's body and self-disclosure.

Robert Morey, *ISLAMIC INVASION; CONFRONTING THE WORLD'S FASTEST GROWING RELIGION*, Eugene, Ore. USA, Harvest House Publishers.

From the condition of being for centuries an obscure Middle Eastern religion, Islam has today exploded into world consciousness as the second largest religion in the world. Dr. Robert Morey executive director of the Research and Education Foundation explains in the book the fascination it holds for the followers. With a parable of an imaginary religion claiming George Washington as the prophet of high God Ba-al, all his writings first written in heaven on a tablet, and demanding that all should pray facing toward Washington DC, the author states that Islam is a form of cultural imperialism in which the religion and culture of seventh century Arabia have been raised to the status of divine law. Women are treated as property, to be controlled with whip like camels, and are required to dress everywhere the way Arabian women were clad in the desert even before Mohammed. Islam is distinctively an Arabian cultural religion.

The term 'Islam' itself was originally a secular concept indicating defiance of death, heroism to die in battle. Only slowly did the term come to mean "submission". Even the English word "assassin" comes from the Arabic 'Hashshashin' describing those Muslims who smoked hashish to whip themselves into a religious frenzy before killing their enemies. Islam has retained great many elements from former religions especially in the worship of the black stone at Kaaba and the rites of pilgrimage. It is actually pre-Islamic religion in monotheistic form. Allah was a pre-Islamic deity worshipped at Mecca. It was the personal name of the Moon God, a male deity, with the crescent as his symbol. What Morey is saying is that one should not judge Islam with the norms from Western religio-cultural traditions but against the historical background of the Arabic tribal traditions from which it arose. Only in that way it will be possible to understand its religious message and the attraction it holds for the masses.

John Tully Carmody and Denise Lardner Carmody, *CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY AND THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS*, New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991.

The impartial and purely academic study of the "history of religions" like the rise of Buddhist philosophy or the development of Muslim Law, or Taoist rites for exorcising a person possessed by demons, apart from being good in itself has actually "opened new horizons in which the persistence of humanity's fascination with sacredness and divinity becomes more impressive than many theologians have appreciated" (p. 3). According to Carmody and Carmody the history of religions presents a considerable challenge and stimulus to Catholic spirituality. As we learn more about the spiritual insights of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Jews, Confucians and Taoists and many others what becomes obvious is that the grace of God has been more magnanimous than we have previously appreciated. The thesis of the book is that "the God revealed in Jesus Christ has been at work everywhere, encouraging people to be their better selves — encouraging them finally to surrender themselves to the divine mercy" (p. 4).

Some scholars of the history of religions resent theologians making correlation between their faith and other religions as if this would taint the originality of the spiritual traditions of other religions. In fact the Christian interest is to see how the achievements of other religions relate to their own faith, what they imply for their own commitment to Christ. What Christians have acknowledged is that the divine plan for human salvation is much larger than "what has gone on in their own church or through their own theological categories" (p. 6). Catholic spirituality itself is not anything divisive, but ecumenical, completely congenial and familiar to Protestant and Greek Orthodox. It is the existential face of a faith, which though "indebted to Roman authorities is not indentured to them. Living faith always escapes tidy controls" (p. 7). As Christians approach the testimony and religious experience of Hindu yogins, Buddhist monks, Muslim sufis, Jewish rabbis, and others, "they need not fear diabolical error" (p. 8). The Spirit of God is working in other religions too: As St. Paul tells the Philippians (4: 8) whatever is admirable in human existence belongs to God's grace, and there is no humanity apart from divine grace. God is the Lord of all history and culture. A

viable spirituality deals with all aspects of people's lives. The book tries to concentrate on prayer and social justice, which satisfy the twofold commandment summarising Jesus' programme of wholehearted love of God and love of neighbour as oneself.

The authors start with religions of oral peoples who without written texts deal with their myths and rituals intimately. Third and fourth chapters of the book discuss Asian religious traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shinto. The core of Hindu spiritual formation is instruction in sacred knowledge as the means to liberation (p. 62). For Buddhism the first step to social justice is the enlightenment of individuals. Buddha thought that good social life would follow if people could meet in concord (p. 74). Chapter 5 deals with Judaism and Islam, sister religions to Christianity. Meditating on Torah and Qura'n and trying to live by their precepts has been far from legalistic.

After discussing in chapter 6 certain methodological issues like the idea of the sacred, the right way to interpret texts, the humanistic perspective on religions, personalism in spirituality and the like, the book concludes with chapter 7 devoted to a final reflection on the challenges presented by non-Christian views on prayer and social justice. Divinity appear in them not only as awesome but also as uncanny. In the oral traditions when nature was the prime deity human beings have been ambiguous about the ultimate powers. Interest in fertility, transition from death to life, and ecstatic sources of meaning endured in oral peoples till recent times. All over the world from Asia to Europe and Africa to South America, native cultures have been far more absorbed with spirituality, meaning, harmony with the divine powers, ecstatic techniques.

In higher religions like Hinduism and Buddhism the experience of the sage, though impersonal is central. Sages know how to stop suffering by quenching desire. Wisdom is knowing how to find or live by ultimacy in the midst of transiency. Jewish, Christian and Muslim experience also speak of wisdom. But they take the cue from the likes of Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, who announced the words of a personal God.

As the authors conclude, Christian spirituality has to gain a great deal from the knowledge of these different religions and

from secularism which developed in modernity and created an eclipse of God from high culture. "The great masses of people who found their religious lives troubled were victims of social disfunctions...One can say that God has always lived or died by people's individual sense of interiority, which no social shifts can take away, but this is a half truth." (165) Art and creative science, parenting and friendship, sexual love and prayer continue to mediate experiences of the sacred.

Perhaps this is too optimistic a view of the spirituality of religions and the non-religion of secularism. There is another side of spirituality which seems to be almost ignored by the authors, namely its mission. Spiritual life is not for mere personal consumption. So what each tradition can contribute that is unique and how they can receive from others and move towards the one Kingdom of God is an important question. Interiority and mysticism are not the end of religion, but rather its starting point. As all religious traditions are the common heritage of all human beings, Hindu spirituality and Buddhist dharma and the spiritual experience of the oral traditions belong to all. I cannot look at a Muslim's spirituality as "his tradition", and ask "what can I steal from him to enrich "my tradition". Jesus Christ the one Son of God who entered human history belongs to all. So the Christian task is not merely to pick and choose whatever is good in other traditions, but also to ask how they can be made aware that Jesus belongs to them too. No one can experience God as father and attain a fellowship with him except through the one Son.

John B. Chethimattam

Editorial

Culture is a very important factor in shaping human personality and society. A new born infant with little resource for survival is almost totally dependent on the mother who nurtures and protects it. Ever since then the child keeps on interacting with more and more persons and environmental factors through all of whom it experiences and learns the customs, manners, beliefs etc., that is, the *culture* of his people and becomes an accepted member of the society. Statements like "Acculturation makes a person out of a human organism", "Personality cannot be ripped out of its cultural setting", "All reality, as known, is a cultural reality, and all human experience is culturally mediated" are indicators of popular conviction about the significance of culture.

Since culture is life-ambience of people, its constituents like beliefs, gender roles, child-rearing practices, occupational patterns, economic outlooks, social-class relations, artistic-literary expressions etc., do considerably affect the quality and style of people's lives as well as contribute to the diversity and differences found among peoples of various cultures. A key factor that speaks about the quality and calibre of a culture is the ethical/moral values — i. e., the *ethos* — that are ingrained into it and realized in and through its multifarious expressions. In fact, 'ethics' which refers to the totality of normative contents considered to be valid by a given society derives from *ethos*. (The word 'morals' derives from *mores*, meaning the accepted norms, customs and manner of a society.) Hence ethics/morals is an integral part of a culture. While culture gives birth to its *ethos* and ethics, this ethics in turn becomes normative for cultural expressions and practices.

This mutual influence and dependence of culture and ethics sometimes give rise to certain unwarranted assumptions and/or practices. One of them is the view that ethics is purely culture-bound and relative and hence there cannot be any universally valid ethics. Another, particularly in an age when society is easily fragmented on the basis of race, religion, politics, social class etc., is that each group/subgroup may absolutise its cultural heritage and ideology and take a fundamentalist stand, militating against others. This in turn aggravates the fragmentation of the society.

Thirdly, since culture is a strong conditioning force, taming people into its fold, there is the possibility that people, particularly vulnerable sections of the people, may become uncritically resigned to, or inadvertently subdued or simply conquered by, or have to helplessly tolerate, certain dominant but unfair and unjust elements of a culture. Such 'cultural elements' which victimize its own people and often cause tensions and conflicts in the society definitely need to be critically assessed and rectified. And that is very much a task of moral science.

It is against this background that this number of *Jeevadhara* reflects about culture and ethics. The first article — "Culture and ethics in interaction" by A. Tharamangalam — deals with certain salient points of interaction between culture and ethics. Though ethics is moulded within the ethos of culture, the author stresses that sound ethics is essential for cultural survival and advancement. Dalits are a people wronged by their 'inherited culture' because, on the one hand, it allows the oppressors to exploit them and, on the other, distorts their own self-perception in such a way that most of them are resigned to their fate. A situation which demands a critique of culture, and that is what the second article — "Morality from a Dalit perspective" by X. Ilango — does. There is a lot of talk about values and confusion too, because of the vagueness of the term. So many things and ways of action can be values, but it is important to have a correct hierarchy of values guided by moral values, especially in a culture dominated by consumerism. That is the topic of the third article — "Values, moral development and consumer culture" by this author. While tribal cultures which are comparatively less affected by external influences tend to preserve their cherished values, as the next article "Ethics from the perspective of the tribals" by T. Pullopillil shows, it is also a reminder for all concerned to protect those "little traditions". Despite cultural diversity and differences, there are certain basic values binding all people. Those values, based on authentic humanity and our obligation to foster it, should serve to evolve a global ethics, required today to protect and promote the well-being of the whole mankind, argues G. Therukattil in the final article "Transcultural values and the humanum: Towards a global ethics".

Culture and Ethics in Interaction

Alex Tharamangalam

Here is a very pertinent reflection on the interaction between culture and ethics. Ethics which emerges from culture is the crystallization of the good in the ethos of culture. It becomes a dynamic force for the true progress of culture. Culture and ethics, says the author, converge on certain key points like freedom, values, and normativity. Being convinced that only a genuinely ethical culture has a sustainable future, the author hopes for the emergence of a 'global ethics' in an era of 'global village'. Dr. Alex Tharamangalam is Professor of Philosophy at Paurasthya Vidyapitham, St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam-686 010, Kerala, India.

Introduction

Ruth Benedict, in her book *Patterns of Culture*, writes: "No man ever looks at the world with pristine eyes. He sees it edited by a definite set of customs and institutions and ways of thinking".¹ This alludes to the simple fact that the human is a culturally moulded reality. Any serious attempt to study human activities must consider this fundamental characteristic.² We can therefore say that culture 'creates' the human and vice versa.³ If this is the situation, what will be the relation between ethics — the normative science of human action — and culture? The scope of the present article is to trace out to some extent their interaction.

1. Notion and Characteristics of Culture

The word 'culture' comes from the Latin word 'colere', which means to cultivate. Culture is a 'kind' of cultivation, i. e., all endeavours of persons and community to self-realization, which

1. R. Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Mentor Books, New York, 1934), p. 2

2. Since the primordial importance of culture and ethos is not taken into account, G. Gurvitch criticized H. Bergson's famous work 'The Two Sources of Morality'. Cf. B. Haering, *Free and Faithful in Christ* (Middlegreen, St. Paul Publications, 1981), Vol. 3, p. 211

3. Cf. S. Fuchs, *The Origin of Man and His Culture* (Asian Publishing House Bombay 1963), p. 3

will create a particular atmosphere or environment. Accordingly culture can be generally described as "... a certain kind of environment as changed and shaped by man, and also the human activity that leads to the cultural pattern."⁴ As an environment it is not something natural. But as Malinowski observes, it is 'artificial and secondary', imposed on the natural environment.⁵

Culture refers to human achievement. As Niebhuhr notes, "A river is nature, a canal culture; a raw piece of quartz is nature, an arrow head culture; a moan is natural, a word cultural".⁶ It is not a singular achievement, but a totality. Accordingly, culture includes everything like language, art, religion, myths, customs, habits, beliefs, morals, social organizations, technical processes etc.⁷ Again, culture is not something belonging to an individual alone. It is a social heritage, belonging to all in that particular cultural sphere. Thus culture and social existence go together. Hence, its reality, as Niebhuhr observes, is *sui generis*.⁸

Through communication (for which language is required), education, customs, habits, imitation etc., an individual appropriates the culture of his community. This process may be gradual; but it is simply a fact. Here we can see an important relation between culture and history — what is handed down is the tradition, belonging to the past and thus part of history. According to the interests of the individual, he appropriates this heritage. His

4. R. Scherer, "Culture", in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 2, p. 45

5. Cf. H. R. Niebhuhr, *Christ and Culture* (Harper Torch books, New York, 1956), p. 32

Two well-known theories of culture in anthropological thinking are (a) process-pattern theory of Boas and Kroeber. and (b) Structural-functional theory of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Cf. M. Singer, "The Concept of Culture", in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Vol. 3, pp. 527-543.

6. H. R. Niebhuhr, op. cit., p. 33

7. The terms 'culture' and 'civilization' are rather confusedly used. A general understanding of their meanings can be stated as follows: culture signifies something internal; it is external as long as those external elements are closely related to the internal. Civilization, on the other hand, is primarily external, as outward expression of culture, or "the cultural sphere formed by technology in the service of the external necessities of life and practical utilitarian achievements". R. Scherer, art. cit., p. 45

Cf. also A. J. Krzesinski, *Is Modern Culture Doomed?* (The Devin-Adair Co., New York, 1942), pp. 1-11, EWJ Tomlin, *Psyche Culture and the New Science The Role of PN* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983), pp. 30-31

8. Cf. H. R. Niebhuhr, op. cit., pp. 32-33

encounter with it can cause tension. However, the institutions of humankind are the crystallized forms of the objective cultures handed down the centuries.⁹

Unity of culture, unity of human history, and psychic unity of humankind were the key emphases of anthropologists of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Today, plurality of cultures is an accepted fact. This plurality, however, creates cultural conflicts or tensions. Such tensions can be on various levels: personal (i. e., a person encounters other people of different cultures in different levels of life), communitarian (i. e., a community having a particular culture faces another with a different culture) or national (i. e., one nation with another).¹¹

What would be the basis of culture? It is nothing but the basic nature of the human, i. e., his/her self-transcendence. One transcends oneself by envisaging an end. An animal cannot act with an end and so its actions are stereotyped. According to Romero, 'to be is to transcend'.¹² This transcendence reaches its climax in human freedom and creativity. The infinite universe as the dwelling place is a great incentive¹³ for the human being with the characteristic of transcendence. This is indeed human greatness whereby the human recreates life, recreates everything. From this re-creation and fashioning springs 'the cultural fount at which we need to drink'.¹⁴

In short, culture is the product of human endeavour which influences human life in turn. Having traced out certain characteristics of culture,¹⁵ it is opportune to seek the relationship between culture and ethics. For this, we shall analyse culture in its content and form and thereby try to find out its ethos which will take us to the sphere of ethics.¹⁶

9. R. Scherer, art. cit., p. 47

10. M. Singer, art. cit., p. 527

11. C. Aerath, "The Dialectical Relation between Culture and Ethics", in *Indian Theological Studies* (Vol. 35, 1998), p. 169

12. Cf. H. Rodriguez-Aleata, "Francisco Romero on Culture East and West", in *Philosophy East and West* (Vol. 2, 1952-1953), p. 164

13. E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1944), p. 15

14. Cf. EWF Tomlin, op. cit., p. 187

15. Our analysis was not exhaustive; certain other traits will be discussed in the sequel. Such a method is chosen in order to avoid repetitions.

16. We make use of the analysis of Kroeber. Cf. A. L. Kroeber, *Anthropology* (Oxford and IBH, Calcutta, 1976), pp. 292-295

2. Culture-Ethos-Ethics

We can distinguish culture in its *content* and *form*. Content of a culture means the constituent elements or the aggregates with which it is composed. Some elements may be present in a particular culture and absent in another (eg. slavery, caste system etc.) Usually such contents in any culture can undergo changes; if changes are on the increase, we say there is progress of culture. In other words, the term 'progress of culture' is usually attributed to such quantitative increase. The content of culture is, to use a Greek word, its *eidos*, i. e. explicitly describable appearances of culture.

Form of culture mainly refers to the quality of culture, whereby the elements in it are interrelated in a particular way. Kroeber writes: "The form of culture may therefore be regarded as the pattern of interrelations of the contents that constitute it".

Form of culture is its *ethos*.¹⁷ More than the specific ethics or moral code in a culture, ethos of a culture refers to its totality. Ethos, therefore, refers, as Kroeber further observes, "... to what would constitute disposition or character in an individual; to the system of ideals and values that dominate the culture and so tend to control the type of behaviour of its members". Ethos as quality implies its orientation or goal to be achieved. This is very closely related to the system of values, of which the ethicists speak.

Regarding the ethical significance of ethos, Wolfgang Knuxen holds that ethos implies moral character, it is related to morally accepted behaviour which is concrete; it can be seen only in a social milieu. It is the social system that confers upon the individual its ethos. In other words, ethos is "... the totality of the normative contents which are valid in a given society".¹⁸ Now, what is the meaning and role of ethics?

As we have just seen, from the Greek word 'ethos', ethics takes its origin. It is a normative science of human action. De Finance defines it as "the categorically normative science of human actions, pursued in accordance with the natural light which reason casts".¹⁹ Ethics, as a systematic reflection, tries to touch the

17. The Greek word 'ethos' means custom, character, the habitual way of acting. Its plural signifies residence, habitual abode, dwelling place (of animals or of men).

18. W. Knuxen, "On Ethos and Ethics", in C. Aerath, op. cit., pp. 232-235

19. De Finance, op. cit., p. 15

'quality' of human actions which emanate from the free will of individuals. Hence free actions and human actions are identical. Now, freedom involves responsibility, which is reminiscent of a social context. Again, the element of responsibility implies the notion of values. Ethics, thus, moves in the field of moral values; it aims at a unified moral code for human living. From this we can understand that the form of culture — its ethos, the 'moral' quality that binds all the aggregates in it — is essentially related to ethics; in other words, ethics has its basis or foundation in culture, in the very life of the human.

3. Moments of Convergence

In our attempt to determine the nature of interaction between culture and ethics, it seems appropriate to seek the central areas of their convergence. One may note four principal moments here.

(a) *Cultural as Ethical and Ethical as Cultural*

As distinct from animals that are biologically, physically and instinctively determined, the humans have to work out their own possibilities for self-actualization. The stimuli open various possibilities, which, in turn, become the sketch-plans for human actions. There arises the problem of choice and so life is a composite of repeated acts of choice. Possibilities are realized not only in the environment (i. e., in the world) but in the person him/herself. Here the individual is responsible: s/he plans, finds the means, executes them and realizes the goal.²⁰ Individuals of coming generations can follow the sketch-plans, patterns, or ideàls of their ancestors, which were the products of repeated choice and became parts of the society as customs or mores (Ethics as systematic articulation of the 'mores' is the product of later philosophical reflection). Human actions, out of various possibilities, are cultural and at the same time ethical. Hence, the free and responsible human actions are both cultural and ethical; and hence the identification: cultural as ethical and ethical as cultural.

(b) *Freedom as Keystone*

According to Kant, the concept of freedom constitutes the keystone of the whole system of pure reason, i. e., of transcendental philosophy. Keystone is the stone which is at the summit of an arch and it locks together the parts of the arch in order to form a

20. R. Scherer, art. cit., pp. 252–253.

whole.²² Making use of the example of a keystone, we try to see the convergence of culture and ethics in freedom.

Human action, as we have just seen, is both cultural and ethical. The principal element in a responsible action is the freedom of the individual, i. e., the ability for self-determination. Culture is the expression of human mind and spirit. This is possible only when the individual is free. Culture as the product of human creativity flourishes, only in freedom. Again, freedom negatively means 'freedom from, i. e., from all political, economic and other kinds of bondages. It is the function of the state, as a step towards the promotion of culture, to safeguard the freedom of the individual. Positively, freedom is self-possession, to be present to oneself fully, to be self-sufficient.²³ Only in this self-sufficiency does self-determination take place as a choice among various possibilities. Hence cultural actions and ethical actions find their original ground in freedom. Thus freedom becomes the keystone binding together culture and ethics.

(c) *Value-relation*

The notion of value is related to that of good and the latter is explained in relation to human faculties. As traditionally understood, good is the object of the will. Good can be seen as both end and value. Value consists in the character or quality of a thing for which it is prized or desired as in certain cultural products, standards or ideas which people prize or see as important for them and for others. It is something more than practical utility.²⁴ Ethics is a codified system of moral values with regard to human action.

Now, culture can be explained in terms of value. According to Niebhur, the world of culture is that of values which are dominantly good for all men. One may even find a scale of values

21. I. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* A 4 (A refers to the first edition in 1788)

22. F. O'Farrell, "Kant's Concept of Freedom" in *Gregorianum* (Vol. 55 1974), p. 461

23. For the Greeks, such a freedom is 'autarky': 'the condition of having within oneself one's goal and principle. one's beginning and end.' This is the same meaning of *libertas* (Latin), i. e., dominium in actus suos, dominium super se ipsum. Cf. Max Muller. "Freedom, Philosophical", in *Sacramentum Mundi*. Vol. 2, p. 352

24. Cf. De Finance, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51; A. L. Kroeber, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295

in culture, in which "man begins with himself as the chief value and the source of all other values".²⁵ Culture as a system of values opens its precise dimension: the ethical dimension. In every culture we see serious attempts for the promulgation, propagation and conservation of its values!²⁶ Ethics is simply a reflective codification of values present in every culture. This value-relation is a moment of their convergence.

(d) *Normative character*

Both culture and ethics are normative. The word 'norm' comes from the Latin 'norma', which means 'set square'²⁷. Ethics is normative in the sense that it enables us to make ethical judgment about human actions that they are right or wrong. In other words moral norms set the arena to fix good and bad actions.

Norm as seen in culture need not be expressed in propositional forms, i. e., it may be implicit and so understood without words. An individual, living in a particular culture, appropriates it in its various models; it becomes a social pressure for him.²⁸ These norms can be articulated as laws, thereby human actions are determined or judged as right or wrong. Thus in normative character too, ethics and culture converge.

4. Transition from Ethics to Culture

Ethics, as based on the moral experience of people of diverse cultures, leads to a new culture. This is the process of transition from ethics to culture. In its systematic reflection, ethics will promote only those values which are good for all; at the same time, it will refuse those practices which are not acceptable. Thus, in its attempt at producing a new culture, we can say, it is task-oriented or future-oriented.²⁹ Ethics as leading to a new culture, again, manifests their interaction.

5. Need of an Ethical Culture

According to Teilhard de Chardin, we live in a world of evolution, where it proceeds to the phase of socialization, i. e.,

25. Cf. H. R. Niebhur, *op. cit.*, p. 34-35

26. Is not the content of every culture — art, music, myth, religion, etc. — a permanent way of conserving values? It seems, we may be able to think in that line.

27. De Finance, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107

28. Cf. C. Aerath, *art. cit.*, pp. 169-171

29. Cf. C. Aerath, *op. cit.*, p. 51

evolution moves to the formation of humankind: 'after man, mankind'³⁰. Our century, as he sees it, undergoes the second phase of socialization, known as the phase of compression.³¹ Through our revolutions in communication media and technology, we form a "global village", which is a bewildering fact! Why? Humans belonging to many cultures — plurality of cultures — are coming together and their encounters cause tensions or conflicts in different levels of their existence. Such tensions are at present expressed in various levels of life through fundamentalism, fanaticism, selfishness, frantic ideologies, consumeristic tendencies etc. They kill peace of mind of moderns, causing divisions and even wars. These are perversions of the present day culture due to lack of ethical vision. Albert Schweitzer already at the beginning of this century, noted that 'by denying ethical values modern men were simply sinking'³². A culture without ethical values is therefore blind; in other words, it will be a curse for humanity in future, simply leading to collective extinction.³³

In such a context, the only solution is to promote an ethically well-founded cultural system. P. L. Ralph observes that 'the real task ahead is not to create an industrial civilization but to create an ethical one', where promotion of fuller, richer and abundant life will be the key issue.³⁴ Such a culture may be universal, which must be deep rooted in particular cultures; the ethics here may be "meta-ethics, in the sense that it includes a value system: the most basic values and truths of every culture, at the same time, it is above all cultures."³⁵ Only an ethical culture will produce the "good will" Kant has foreseen, or the 'good conscience', of which B. Häring speaks, or the 'innocent heart', christianity

30. T. de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: 1959), pp. 269ff

31. P. Maroky [ed.], *Convergence* (Kottayam, 1981), pp. 16-19

32. A. Schweitzer, *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization. The Philosophy of Civilization*. Part I, translated by C. T. Campion (A & C Black Ltd., London, 1932). p. 44

33. Charles Darwin saw that there is no progress for mankind in strife and selfishness. Enlightened cooperation and development of culture are possible only when moral faculties are promoted, Cf. J. E. Greene, *100 Great Scientists* (Pocket Books, New York, 1964), pp. 248-249

34. P. L. Ralph, *The story of our Civilization* [Comet Books, London, 1957], p. 285

35. Cf. B. Häring, op. cit., pp. 212. 222-223; C. Aerath, art. cit., p. 176

presents.³⁶ Its realistic cultivation is the exact point of interaction between culture and ethics.

6. Conclusion

This has been an attempt to seek the various ways of interaction between culture and ethics. Culture and its ethos take us to the realm of ethics and thus ethics has its foundation in the concrete reality of culture. Ethics and culture are concerned with human actions which are free and moving along the path of values; both enjoy a normative character in the sphere of human actions. Since ethics is a reflective systematization of the ethos born into the culture, certain cultural practices may be discarded and others may be accepted. As a result, a new culture will be born — i.e., ethics 'breeds' a new culture. A culture has perennial value only when it is ethical. In other words, human folk, with its cultural specificum, has a future as long as it is ethical. Thus culture and ethics interact for the betterment of both. Ethics without culture is sterile; culture without ethics is a curse. Freedom, the fountain of every culture, is not lawless; lawful culture is thus ethical.

St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary
Kottayam — 686 010

36. Kant wrote, "There is no possibility of thinking of anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be regarded as good without qualification, except a *good will*". I. Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by J. W. Ellington; in *Immanuel Kant Ethical Philosophy* [Haeketh Publishing Company, 1983], p. 7

Morality from a Dalit Perspective

Xavier Ilango

Disfranchisement of the Dalits at all levels — social, political, economic etc. — calls for the emergence of a morality from the Dalit perspective. After surveying various alienations and disadvantages suffered by Dalits, the article delineates certain basic features of a dalit theology, a theology based on the inner suffering and pathos of Dalits, a theological attempt whose focus shifts from philosophical propositions to the experience of people. A dalit moral approach rejects the social structures of the oppressors and at the same time liberates the dalits from false self-perceptions. B. R. Ambedkar's lead is specially recognized here. Dr. X. Ilango, professor of moral theology, can be contacted at St. Paul's Seminary, Trichy — 620 001, Tamilnadu, India.

0.1. Introduction

Every village in India is going to be a part of the global village through Internet. The whole world is thrown open to us in seconds. Are we really racing towards such a goal? Facts present a contrary picture. The dalits all over India still experience that they are no people, no persons. There is a consistent denial of human rights in every day social encounters. Social disabilities forced on them lead to an ethical disenfranchisement. By ethical disenfranchisement we mean the denial of moral protection to them in the society.¹ In such a context we try to envisage a morality from a dalit perspective. We try to distinguish three phases. The first phase will enumerate their alienating experiences at different levels. The second phase will highlight some of the theological responses that have emerged so far. This will include a secular moral response of a great revolutionary, Ambedkar. Finally the moral challenges that confront us today from their perspective will bring us to a moral vision for the future.

1. Geoffrey P. Redmond, "Is there a Specifically Buddhist Approach to Social Ethics", in A. K. Narain and D. C. Ahir, eds., *Ambedkar Buddhism and Social Change* [Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1994]. 123-124

1.1. Social Marginalisation

Social ostracism continues as the dalits of India struggle to emerge as a powerful social force. Their recent awakening has enabled them to assert their civic rights. This is to assume equality in the social structure that is predominantly unequal and dominant towards the lowest in the social rank. Assertion of equality and self-dignity evokes untoward response from the dominant castes. In the recent past the southern districts of Tamilnadu confronted a social situation where the caste people systematically consolidated their social power as dominant communities. With a political backing that is entrenched in money power perpetuates the struggle against the dominated dalits, Caste consciousness is revived vigorously which reveals itself inordinately against any assertion of dalits of their social equality. Untouchability is practised in respect of not permitting dalits to village cremation ground and approach road to it. Separate tumblers are still used in many tea-shops in Tamilnadu for serving tea to the dalits. Such inhuman social practices reveal the callous attitude of the caste communities. A strategic assertion of civic rights by the dalits and a consistent opposition from the caste people perpetuate a social conflict that reflects itself in the sharing of political power.

1.2. Political Malfeasance

Melavallavu, a small hamlet 30 kms. south of Madurai saw the gory murder of six dalits in May 97. The offence of the dalits was their assertion of political rights in a democratic country. One of the six dalits was elected as the president of the local panchayat and the jati people could not stand the leadership of their erstwhile untouchable brother. Even after a year the culprits of the crime have not been arrested and lives of the families of these dalits are still under constant threat. Political rights are still a distant dream to the dalits of India.

Caste has an economic and non-economic identity which plays a vital role in the polity of the Indian villages. Dalits enjoy a scanty representation in the national politics. In the local administration power representation is almost nil. Caste system as a political power conditions the consciousness of the dalits to submit themselves to the lower status offered in the society.

Denial of political rights marks deeper implications of economic deprivation.

1.3. Economic Forfeiture

The process of globalisation that shakes the whole world today affects the dalits at their basic existence. "Land, water and employment are the basic resources of livelihood for the poor. Anything that weakens the control of dalits, adivasis and women on these resources, paves the way for their marginalisation and impoverishment"² As the state abdicates its responsibilities towards dalits, life has become a burden to them. The historical injustice meted out to them kept them away from the economic rat race. Today most of them are employed in the agricultural sector. In the new economic process agriculture is becoming unproductive which means a literal abandonment of the dalits both by the government and the society. As the traditional sources of income and new possibilities for employment are at stake dalits are impoverished to the core.³ This reveals their inhuman existence that is devoid of social protection.

1.4. Cultural Alienation

In the village of Gandadevi, Sivagangai district of Tamilnadu, the dalits wanted to participate in the car procession of the village feast. The caste Hindus united together to oppose the decision of the dalits and that brought the village feast to an end. Nobody could take the car procession as the district collector issued a special order to stop everything in order to avoid communal conflicts. Assertion of religious rights by the dalits meets with the same plight as that of other rights. It is a historical process in which they lost their "religio-cultural self-identity as a separate group by losing control over their gods, places of worship and the right to administer to their own people's religious needs."⁴ The loss of cultural identity hastens the debasement of the dalits. By removing the dalits from the central stage of cultural

2. VAK Report. "Grassroots Impact of Globalisation". *Integral Liberation*, September 1997. 148

3. Ambrose Pinto, "Dalits and Globalisation", *Integral Liberation*, September 1997, 153-154

4. A. M. A. Ayrookuzhiel, "The Religious Factor in Dalit Liberation", in Bhagwan Das and James Massey, eds., *Dalit Solidarity*. [Delhi: ISPCK, 1995] 128

celebrations the high caste communities further their vested interests.

2.0. Dalits as the Agents of Theology

The deteriorated condition of the dalits has evoked moral responses from social humanists as well as theologians of India. The response of the dalit theologians challenges the very mode of theologising in India today. We will present a few dominant trends in dalit theology which will unravel a right moral vision from the perspectives of the dalits.

2.1. Why Dalit Theology?

Dalit reality is a unique social phenomenon. It includes a category of people who are socially ostracised, culturally debased and economically deprived. Their case cannot be reduced to any particular social problem such as poverty or discrimination. A dalit theologian remarks, "There is a lack of understanding of dalitness. It has a material and ideational dimension. They are economically deprived and socially ostracised. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. At the level of consciousness, every dalit feels that he is not wanted in his country and in his Church."⁵ In biblical terms, they are 'no people'. From their theological endeavour dalit theology emerges.

The word "'dalit' means (1) the broken, the torn, the rent, the burst, the split, (2) the opened, the expended, (3) the bisected, (4) the driven asunder, the dispelled, the scattered, (5) the down-trodden, the crushed, destroyed, (6) the manifested, the displayed."⁶ The term dalit signifies both the broken and oppressed people and their state of oppression and dehumanisation. Out of 840 million inhabitants of India, nearly 134 million are dalits.⁷ In Christian Churches they are 50% to 80%. Can any one afford to be indifferent to such a dehumanisation of millions in a country? The urgency of dalit theology has its source here.

5. Antony Raj, "Disobedience. A Legitimate Act for Dalit Liberation", in Arvind P. Nirmal, ed., *Towards a Common Dalit Ideology* [Madras: GLTC] 47

6. A. P. Nirmal, "Doing Theology from a Dalit Perspective", in Arvind P. Nirmal, ed., *A Reader in Dalit Theology* [Madras: GLTC] 139

7. George Soares-Prabhu, "The Indian Church challenged by Poverty and

"Why a dalit theology? Why not a theology of the poor? or a theology of the people? Even with the best of intentions, giving priority to the fact of oppression and exploitation, these formulations fail to reveal the concrete subjectivity of the diverse sections of the oppressed, their particular experiences, histories, and aspirations."⁸ Indian theology which is a continuation of Brahmanical tradition has failed to include the aspirations, yearnings, struggles, historical experience of the dalit masses.⁹ When the dalits tried to assert their identity, both secular as well as Christian ideology failed to give shape to their strivings. The absence of such efforts led to the emergence of an indigenous dalit theology.

2.3. Content of Dalit Theology

Dalit theology comes from dalits' struggle for humanisation. It is a liberation struggle for their human dignity, i. e., to live as people in the image of God. This has a liberation motif that makes it authentically Indian. This liberation motif emerges from their pathos. "A Christian dalit theology — therefore is a story of afflictions, bondage, harsh treatment, the toil and the tears of the dalits. A genuinely dalit theology will be characterised by pathos."¹⁰ It also anticipates their liberation. It is a radical discontinuity from the classical Indian Christian theology of the Brahmanic tradition. It is, therefore, a counter theology.

It is people's theology because people here become a theological category as well as theological concept.¹¹ "It is a people's theology, and a particular people's theology, i. e., that of the dalits, therefore a theology of the dalits by the dalits for the dalits."¹² It is a reflection of faith over the struggle for liberation in God's presence as a community.

8. Saral K. Chatterji, "Why Dalit Theology?" in James Massey, ed., *Indigenous People; Dalits* [Delhi: ISPCK] 179

9. Chatterji, "Why Dalit Theology". 196–197

10. A. P. Nirmal, "Towards a Christian Dalit Theology", in Nirmal, *Reader in Dalit Theology*, 60

11. A. P. Nirmal, "Dalit Theology from a Dalit Perspective". in Nirmal, *Reader in Dalit Theology*, 139

12. M. E. Prabhakar, "The Search for a Dalit Theology", in Nirmal, *Reader in Dalit Theology*, 47

2.4. Theological Basis

From a dalit perspective, theological concepts and meanings are reinterpreted. Accordingly, "Theology may also mean an intellectual explication and self critical analysis of the word of God, and the faith of the Church."¹³ The centrality of biblical tradition in general and of the gospel of Jesus, in particular, is the humanisation of man. The process of humanisation involves the revelation of one's real self, revolution in one's life-situation and revaluation of values.

Dalits must know who they are. An identity obscured by the supposedly divine cultural forces of India must be revealed. Such a revelation is possible only if the dalits expose themselves to a culture which can reveal their self-hood.¹⁴ This is a new understanding of revelation by dalits where revelation has to do with the human's self-knowledge and not God's self-disclosure. That means a transformation in understanding God and fellow human beings. This is a cultural renaissance where authentic human nature is revealed to oneself. Dalits need such a revelation.¹⁵

Dalits can understand only a God who is a servant. Prophets project a God who serves. The Christological implications of dalit theology lead to a new vision of Christ.¹⁶ Jesus Christ and his followers were the dalits of the society. We see a Christ who proclaimed liberation to the dalits.¹⁷ He is a person who constantly associated himself with the people who were on the fringes of society.¹⁸ Jesus Christ's identification with the dalits and the option for the dalits¹⁹ is interpreted uniquely in an Indian context.

13. K. Wilson, "An Approach to Christian Dalit Theology", in M. E. Prabhakar *Towards a Dalit Theology* [Delhi: ISPCK, 1989] 49

14. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, "Towards a Creation of Counter-Culture: Problems and Possibilities", in Xavier Irudaya Raj, ed., *Emerging Dalit Theology* [Madras: JEST - TTS Publications, 1990], 64-70.

15. Ibid, 50-52.

16. Dhyanchand Carr, "Dalit Theology is Biblical and it Makes the Gospel Relevant", in Nirmal, *Reader in Dalit Theology*, 71-83. He interprets the Gospel of Mathew entirely from a dalit perspective and proves how relevant is it for the liberation of the dalits.

17. Mt. 11: 5; Lk. 6: 18-19.

18. Francisco Moreno, *Moral Theology from the Poor: Moral Challenges of the Theology of Liberation* (Quezon City, Philippines: 1988), 22. They are the marginalised and those who do not count.

19. John Desrochers, *Christ the Liberator* [Bangalore: The Centre for Social Action, 1984]. 43-52.

Jesus invalidates all systems of purity and declares that "the only source of pollution is the uncompassionate heart that generates 'evil thoughts', that is, harmful intentions that lead to injurious action. It is not the tax collectors and sinners (the dalits), with whom Jesus associates, who are 'polluted' but precisely the Pharisees (the so-called 'clean castes') who treated them with contempt."²⁰ It was a new way of looking at purity and pollution concepts of his society and of determining the purity of the place in the coming together of the human community in sincerity and love.²¹ This radical interpretation of purity could flow from Jesus because he experienced God as loving Father not primarily as holy.²² As we have seen earlier, if God's revelation is understood as understanding the authentic human nature of oneself, then what follows is not conversion but revolution. While conversion is subjective, revolution is objective, concrete and social. A dalit revolution could humanise the world.

2.5, Theologies in Dialogue

Dalit theology by its very commitment to the dalit people shifts from philosophical propositions to the actual life of the people. It is concerned with life in all its absurdity and inconsistency. This is the trait of dalit theology. It serves the interest of the dalits because they are the oppressed ones. A move from philosophical propositions to people implies an interest in people's experience rather than in vertical revelation.²³

The pathos of the dalits becomes the source of dalit theology. Even God is understood from this perspective. There is a methodological exclusivism in dalit theology. This is to shut out the encroaching influences of the dominant theologies. This is not exclusivism. Dalit theology is a search for identity. Since traditional theologies suppress the identities of the people, people's theology seeks to express the distinctive identity of the people. Dalits are the people who lost their history. Their history must be rewritten. Dalit history becomes vital for dalit theology.²⁴

20. Soares-Prabhu, "The Table Fellowship of Jesus", 151. 21. Jn. 4: 23

22. Soares-Prabhu, "The Table Fellowship of Jesus", 152

23. A. P. Nirmal, "Doing Theology from a Dalit Perspective", 142

24. Nirmal, *Doing Theology*. 143-144

3.0. A Paradigm for a Liberative Moral Praxis

Ambedkar responded to the dalit situation in a special way. The dalits believe that, "there can be no common ideology for all dalits, except on the basis of Ambedkarism. For Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, of all the national leaders, as a dalit himself, suffered and laboured for dalit liberation".²⁵ Besides providing a common platform, Ambedkar's response was basically moral in order to ethically enfranchise the dalits.

3.1. 'To be a Heretic' — a Moral Imperative²⁶

Protest²⁷ became the first response to the oppressive socio-religious structures that enslaved the untouchables. It was not only a revolt against unjust structures²⁸ — but also an effort to indicate the absence of a public conscience.²⁹ It was similarly a move to awaken the individual and society conscience. This protest had multidimensional thrusts. As an ideology, protest becomes a weapon in the hands of the powerless.³⁰ The moral content of the protest is to ascertain the moral worth, the

25. Prabhakar, "Developing a Common Dalit Ideology", 70

26. Christopher S. Queen, "Ambedkar, Modernity, and the Hermeneutic of Buddhist Liberation", in Narain, *Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism and Social Change*, 99. He quotes Berger and explains how heresy becomes a necessity and an imperative. "... for modern man, heresy typically becomes a necessity ... Modernity creates a new situation in which picking and choosing becomes an imperative."

27. Gore, *Social Context of an Ideology*. 31–120. Assessing the life of Ambedkar and his social movements, Gore recounts elaborately the development of a protest ideology. The ethical motif of Ambedkar's protest was the assertion of untouchables' identity as a separate group. It was also an initiation to the demands of rights and equality.

28. B. R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhiji Have Done?* 277 "To the untouchables, Hinduism is a veritable chamber of horrors. The sanctity and infallibility of the Veda, Smritis and Shastras, the iron law of caste, the heartless law of Karma and the senseless law of states by birth are to the Untouchables. veritable instruments of torture which Hinduism has forged against the untouchables."

29. B. R. Ambedkar, "The Children of India's Ghetto", 94–99. He discusses elaborately how he appealed to the conscience of the caste Hindus and failed. "Not having conscience, the Hindu has no such thing as righteous indignation against the iniquities and injustices from which the untouchables have been suffering. He sees no wrong in these iniquities and injustices and refuses to budge. By his absence of conscience, the Hindu is a great obstacle in the path of the removal of untouchability."

30. Felix N. Sugirtha Raj, "Developing a Common Dalit Ideology. Is it a Myth or Reality?" in Nirmal, *Common Dalit Ideology*, 32. It comes out of a

individuality and dignity of the human. Protest is a social, political and cultural affirmation by the oppressed of their identity in the main stream of society. This is the first step in Ambedkar's moral praxis of liberation.

3. 2. Rejection of an Oppressive Ethical World-View

The ideology of protest advances further in rejecting the ethical world-view of the oppressors. This is quite obvious in the non-acceptance of both the social structure, i. e., a *varna-jati* oppressive class ideology and religious doctrines and practices (Brahmanical appropriation of Hinduism). This rejection rationally justifies itself through an ethical invalidation of systemic evils entrenched both in the social as well as religious structures. Religion is relevant only when it guarantees the development of moral consciousness in every member of the society. It should offer a scheme of divine governance that is essentially moral. Ambedkar thus insisted on a religion being exclusively moral in its content.

Rejection of the ethical world-view of the oppressors implies the repudiation of the Brahmanical world-view³¹. It is the pursuance of particular ends of life according to the particular entitlements through birth. If entitlements come through birth for the oppressor it must be the contrary for the oppressed. Merits and human worth come first in determining entitlements and claims.

3. 3 Two Perspectives in Deriving a Morality

The necessity to form a new moral approach has two inter-related perspectives. The first is that the oppressive Brahmanical social structures and the underlying ideology had become indifferent to the existence of the untouchables. It created an atmosphere where untouchables hardly had an opportunity to develop themselves as humans. Brahmanic socio-religious ideology could not

conviction that unless the untouchables protest and change the present condition, they cannot attain liberation. Lourdasamy, *Religion as Social Protest*, 108. See also Lourdasamy, *Religion as a Political Weapon*, 75.

31. Gail Omvedt, *Dalit Visions; Tracts for the Time*, 8 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1995), 50–51. "Ambedkar's long-term strategy was to break up that majority, to dissolve Hinduism itself ..." because, "For Ambedkar, and the militant dalits who followed him, Hinduism, in the final analysis, was a religion of caste that had to be renounced and destroyed if the masses of India were to win liberation."

thrive without a hierarchisation of classes and persons. Hierarchisation (in its Brahmanical form) implies the exaltation of a few and the dehumanisation of others. The moral values did not enshrine egalitarian values as part of the moral scheme.

The second perspective is that the oppressed dalits uncritically participated in the moral system of the oppressors. Their victimisation in the socio-religious system was convincingly accepted as an outcome of the natural and divine ordination. To liberate them from such false perceptions and value misidentification, the untouchables had to be provided with an alternative moral value system. This second perspective led Ambedkar to formulate a moral approach that was specifically liberative to the dalits. This approach has dalits as the beginning and centre of a moral praxis³².

3.4. Hermeneutics of an Ethical Ideology

Ambedkar evolved a new ethical ideology by engaging himself in an ethical discourse with Buddhism. His epistemic and emotive association with Buddhism was intensely moral in content. It was morally meaningful to him because Buddhism emerged principally as a religion of social ethics³³ and challenged the Brahmanical moral world-view of hierarchisation by birth. It offered a radical notional change and an ideological alternative to the Hindu religion. "It means a complete change in the outlook and attitude towards men and things"³⁴.

Ambedkar found the ethical ideology of Buddhism relevant to moral praxis from the perspective of the dalits. It was basically egalitarian and essentially moral in its outlook.

The important hermeneutic principles³⁵ he applied were three: i) reasonableness; ii) social benefit; iii) subjective certainty.

32. M. E. Prabhakar, "The Search for a Dalit Theology", in M. E. Prabhakar, *Towards a Dalit Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1989), 41-42. The untouchables and dalits rejected the religion of gods to attain equality. The insistence was on the moral man who is a responsible moral agent.

33. Queen, "Ambedkar, Modernity", 100

34. K. N. Kadam, "Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhism as an Instrument of Social Change", in Narain, *Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism and Social Change*, 40

35. James Massey, *Towards Dalit Hermeneutics; Re-reading the Text, the History and the Literature* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), vii. By hermeneutics he means 'the operation of decoding' our historical and literary data, both ancient and

By insisting on the rational aspect expected the dalits to accept a moral system freely. It is not an irrational imposition from above but a personal choice of the oppressed themselves. An integral benefit (of social, ethical and spiritual, economic) to the untouchables becomes the norm of its validation. This is an internalisation of new moral values by which the oppressed become the agents of their own liberation.

3.5. Inclusive Ethical approach

His agenda for moral praxis is based on this assumption. "Ethics exists primarily to protect the weaker from injury or exploitation by the stronger"³⁶. Such an assumption through its new approach and close analysis tries to expose and suggest how society functions to preserve power interests and how they can be overthrown. Preservation of power and the refusal to share with the weaker section of society results in the oppression of the weak. This basic ethical conflict of exploitation is the source of human suffering³⁷.

Here comes the need to find a way out of the incessant exploitation. Ambedkar identified positive³⁸ and inclusive ethical attributes in Buddhism. Redmond remarks Hinduism sets a hierarchy of moral worth, by which some were excluded from full ethical enfranchisement. Buddhism's inclusive ethics excludes nobody from its fold of liberation. In the history of humanity, oppression and victimisation continues in a futile cycle of *samsara*. In such a process, one group is always marginalised and denied ethical protection. The inclusive ethical

modern. The purpose of doing this exercise is to comprehend the original meaning of certain myths based on various ideologies that were used to uphold the interest of some classes. Here the principles of hermeneutics become the norm of decoding and recoding moral norms.

36. Redmond, "Buddhist Approach to Social Ethics", 124

37. Redmond, "Buddhist Approach to Social Ethics", 125

38. Guru, "Anchoring Ambedkar in Liberalism", 1988. Though Ambedkar's morality is seen as having a positivistic approach to social problems, Guru distinguishes it to be of a special kind. Ambedkar's positivism aimed at the creation of a radically distinct social order. On the contrary "positivism treats history and society as the experience of similar people struggling with similar problems in changing circumstances. It treats history as an endless series of problem-solving or interest accommodation."

approach aims at liberating both the oppressors and the oppressed from the cycle of oppression and victimisation. This happens not through an adjudication of actions as right or wrong but through cultivating the individuals to perceive the actions in the right way³⁹. Thus, Ambedkar locates a moral approach in Buddhism that promises the removal of suffering through enlightenment rather than through increasing the ethical conflicts. This seems to be one way of interpreting Ambedkar's adaptation of Buddhist inclusive ethics. The main tenets of this ethical approach are not to categorise anything rigidly as good and bad which becomes the source of suffering. Remove the ignorance both in the oppressor and in the oppressed and that will enlighten them about their entrenchment in the cycles of *samsara*.

3. 6. Moral Deliberations

The origin and necessity of morality are attributed to restraining the fittest. Morality should not be a handmaid to protect group interests. In this sense, morality becomes anti-social. With an anti-social morality, society remains a collective disorganised, factional grouping⁴⁰. This results in the absence of common models and common standards. The individual is left helpless in attaining consistency of mind. A society that nurtures the supremacy of one group over another, irrespective of its rational and proportionate claims, inevitably leads to conflicts. The best way to solve social conflicts is to have common rules of morality that are sacred to all. The motive of making morality sacred is to guarantee the growth of the individual⁴¹.

The paradigm for a liberative moral praxis can be synthesised in this way. The oppressed protest against the system of the oppressors. This leads to the assertion of their self-hood and human personality. They reject the ethical world-view of the oppressors, which means a refusal to participate in their value system and non-compliance with their victimisation. They opt for an alternative value system that is capable of ensuring them moral consciousness, protection and humanity. It promises liberation from ethical conflicts, not through exacerbation of

39. Redmond, "Buddhist Approach to Social Ethics", 133

40. B. R. Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, 324

41. *Ibid.*, 325

ethical issues but by the removal of ignorance over such issues. People become the point of departure as well as discerners of moral principles. Such a paradigm that emerges from Ambedkar's thought on untouchability leads us to a moral vision that is basically liberative.

4.0. Moral Response to the Challenges

Dalit situation as well as the theology emerges therefrom poses a moral challenge. It is an imperative to commit oneself to the cause of the oppressed dalits. We find an approach of critical historicity very relevant here. A commitment to the least of humans turns to be a historical imperative of an absolute character. This absoluteness of moral imperative can be understood as objective absolutes in history in so far as they are committed to the realisation of the dignity of the least. A failure to do so will end in making our moral discernment subjective and relative in character. Historical critical approach is holistic and comprehensive.

As moral agents, dalits' position in the society from the cultural, socio-economic and political condition influences their moral behaviour. Moral commitment to the cause of the dalits becomes vital in doing morality because class caste position decides our moral position and choices. In India, commitment to the kingdom values of love, justice and brotherhood cannot but exist in a struggle against untouchability⁴². Morality here looks partial. It is only a preferential option for the worst affected humans of the society, which includes universal brotherhood and solidarity. Morality takes shape in the form of goals and orientation.

Let us consider the moral virtue of ahimsa (non-violence) in order to clarify the role of a particular perspective in moral theologising. Normal understanding of this virtue is a renunciation of brute force. The power enjoyed by a caste human is normal. From the perspective of the dalits, the power exerted by such a person is already violence. It is violence because it dehumanises them. When the powerless is empowered, then it may look like a threat

42. S. Arokiasamy, "Sarvodaya through Antyodaya", in Massey *Indigenous People*, 298-300

to and violence against the caste human. In the right sense the empowerment of the powerless is not morally reprehensible.⁴³

We perceive this particular approach in moral theologising as relevant that challenges us to take up the cause of our dalit brothers and sisters. This will disentangle us from moral indifference that fails to address the marginalisation of the dalits as the immediate moral concern of every Christian. Christian moral theology in its special application of social justice must give priority to the inhuman situation of the dalits. Unless and until it becomes an integral part of our Christian moral endeavour, it cannot be an authentic Christian morality in the Indian context.

5.0. Moral Vision

We envisage a moral vision from the perspective of the dalits. This does not imply a new morality but a new approach and understanding of the moral praxis worthy of every human person. The following aspects must be considered seriously in our proposal of a moral vision from the perspective of the dalits.

- * There must be a shift from particular morality to universal morality, which means, from individualistic ethic to a morality of solidarity.
- * Emphasis in moral theology must be given to the growth of the human being with unique self-identity and at the same time, essentially linked to the community.
- * In social relationships, love and justice should be promoted in order to maintain right relationships in the society.
- * Respect of the rights of individuals, especially of the dalits, demands a special kind of social justice, in order to promise them an integral liberation in future.
- * The ways in which religious beliefs had been used to exploit and alienate the dalit masses must be examined so as to make morality the essence of religion and life giving source to the least of the society.
- * Oppressive structures must be identified and eliminated so that nobody would meet the fate of the dalits.
- * Social reconstruction based on the values of God's Kingdom becomes an imperative in order to ensure moral protection even to the lowest in society.

43. S. Arokiasamy, "Sarvodaya", 305-306

Dalit awakening in itself is a liberative praxis that affirms human dignity and equality that is outrightly denied to them in this society. It is important that due significance is rendered to the initiatives of the oppressed. A spontaneous response from the part of the non-dalits is to indifferently reprove and undermine such efforts. Even in our Church we expect them to soft pedal the whole issue so that the glaring injustice does not disturb our conscience.

The struggles of the dalits imply their yearning to become the subjects of their own liberation. Theologies that enter into dialogue with dalit theology and those who desire to be in solidarity with them must acknowledge this factor.

Conclusion

Moral discourse from the inhuman conditions of the dalits challenges us to take a different approach. Critical historicity seems relevant to a moral praxis where correctness or inappropriate actions are decided from the point of view of the victims of the society. Ambedkar's moral praxis indicates a new moral approach to morality. Liberating dalit masses from the world-view of the oppressors and empowering them to be moral agents of their own destinies become an integral part of our morality. Indian context demands such an approach to morality that includes the oppressed masses as the starting point as well as the subject of the moral endeavour. Moral norms are determined from their point of view so that they do not uncritically participate in a moral world that continues to be oppressive. Thus a morality that has the liberative moral praxis of the dalits as its integral part can be authentic Indian morality.

St. Paul's Seminary
Trichy — 620 001

Values, Moral Development and Consumer Culture

Thomas Srampickal

After clarifying the concept of 'value' and making an inquiry into its basis, the article highlights the importance of moral values. This is followed by a brief presentation of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which underscores the importance of various socio-moral experiences in shaping one's morality. The impact of consumer culture on the 'moral ethos' of the society, particularly on the growing generations, is then discussed. Dr. T. Srampickal can be contacted at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam - 686 010, Kerala, India.

Culture is a people's way of life in a broad sense. It is a very inclusive concept covering various aspects of human life and society like thought patterns, beliefs, myths, faiths, arts, aspirations, morals, customs etc.¹ All these realities find their expressions in and through culture which sustains and influences them and is in turn influenced by them. People of a culture share several values, also in the moral realm, which guide their life and choices. However, as the society is exposed to new thinking, experiences, possibilities and ventures, the life-style ('culture') of the people undergoes changes, which reflect also in the realm of values. When however such changes become detrimental to fostering a healthy 'moral ethos' in the society, we have to be critical about the life-style/culture and changes. While many people today welcome the fast spreading consumerism with open arms there are others who are critical about it. It is in this context that we discuss 'values, moral development and consumer culture'.

Since the concept of 'value' appears to be complex and often loosely used, we first make an attempt to clarify its meaning, without of course claiming to thrash out all its complexity and

1. Cfr. M. Singerr "Culture" in D. L. Sills (Ed.) *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, vol. 3, p. 527

nuances. Then we deal with moral values which we believe are most important among values, and their development. Finally, some reflections are made about consumerism and its moral implications.

I

What is value?

We are all familiar with the experience of liking and choosing something in preference to something else. For example, we buy one brand of soap and reject another. We spend a lot of time reading one book and ignore other books. We watch a particular TV channel discarding others. All this already implies valuing. In general, 'value' is something that is desirable, attractive, worthy of esteem and choice. The concept is in fact rather complex and closely related to other concepts like belief, attitude, need, interest etc. Still several scholars have attempted at a systematic definition of the term 'value'. "A value is a belief upon which a man acts by preference", says value-researcher and psychologist, G. Allport.² Sociologist and value-researcher M. Rokeach gives a longer definition, essentially in the same vein: "A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence."³ A value is therefore a perception and conviction about a 'thing' that it is preferable to its opposite or alternative. The 'thing' may be something, a way of behaviour, a state of affairs or a mode of being. The belief is rather durable and shows consistency, though not unchangeable. And a 'value-system' is an enduring organization of such beliefs in a hierarchy of relative importance. L. M. Rulla and his associates, researchers in a psycho-religious and spiritual realm, also understand values as 'enduring abstract ideals of a person which may be ideal end-states of existence or ideal modes of conduct which are the ideal ways of conduct for attaining the terminal value'.⁴ R. B. Williams says that values are standards of desirability and serve as criteria for selection in action.⁵ According to these definitions, value consists in being considered

2. *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, New York, 1961, p. 454

3. *The Nature of Human Values*, New York, 1973, p. 5

4. *Psychological Structure and Vocation*, Dublin, 1985, p. 32

5. Cfr. "Values" in D. L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*; vol. 16, p. 283

to be preferable to something else. This would suppose in the thing preferred a quality or worth which makes it more appealing or preferable to the person than something else. However, a value is not just a conception or belief. It is dynamic and moves one to action. All the authors agree that a value has cognitive, affective and behavioural components. To say that a person has a sense of value means that he knows about the preferred thing or way of action; he feels strongly in favour of it and, when needed, he acts to defend, promote or possess it.⁶ That is, a person's values engage him totally — cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally. The greater the value, the stronger would be one's involvement with it and commitment to it. Does not our own experience teach us that we cherish, assert, fight and die for our values. Quite rightly therefore Allport observes that the true index of a person is his personal values.⁷ Hence, the importance of values.

The concept of value given above has other implications too. It is the preference of a person for something (to something else) that makes it a value for him. Preference, though based on a quality or desirability of the thing, is primarily an attitude/act of personal liking. Hence value is person-centered, subjective and therefore relative. What is a value for one person need not be a value for another. Or what is a great value for one might only be a small value for another. A young man, for example, spends all his available time and energy in playing cricket, watching cricket games and honing on his cricket talent, while a neighbour of his devotes all his time and energy to studying medicine. Or, of the many students who are writing an examination, one copies from the text book and another, though tempted to copy, tells himself 'failure is better than passing by copying' and resists the temptation. Though cricket-skill, knowledge of medicine, passing the examination and being honest are all good and desirable, on the scale of values they weigh quite differently for these youngsters. We all will be able to quote many examples like these for the subjectivity of values. This also points to the difference between 'good' and 'value'. Good is something that is coveted and desirable objectively either in itself or as a means for something else. But that

6. Allport, *op. cit.*, p 7

7. *Ibidem*, p. 454

does not necessarily make it a value, because some people or all people need not desire that thing and prefer it to its opposite or alternative. It becomes a value for one only when one desires it, prefers it (to something else) and chooses it. Therefore we can say that every value is a good, but every good need not be a value.

Types of Values

A point which flows from the above consideration is the multiplicity of values. People consider various things as values on the basis of qualities/traits they prefer. Thus, happiness, peace, money, a good job, fame, etc., are considered to be values by people and they keep trying to attain or realize these values. Similarly, one and the same person may cherish several of these as values for himself/herself and strive after them. This leads us to the question of "types of values". We look at two major classifications of values; first, a rather formal classification proposed mainly by Rokeach and then a more substantive one given by Allport and others.

Values may be *terminal* or *instrumental*. Terminal values are states or modes of being which are desired for themselves, not as means for something else. Peace, happiness, harmony, salvation etc., are good examples of terminal values. Instrumental values, on the contrary, serve as means for attaining goals or realizing ends. They are desirable for their instrumentality in getting other coveted goals. A job, money, knowledge, etc., usually belong to the category of instrumental values. However, the demarcation between terminal and instrumental values is not very rigid. Many of them can overlap. Acquiring knowledge about a particular topic may be a goal in itself (terminal value) for one who spends a lot of time and money to acquire it. Another considers a particular knowledge or qualification as a means (instrumental value) to get a coveted job and a fat salary which in turn will enable her/him for a much desired comfortable life which s/he believes will give peace and happiness. This already points to a hierarchy of values. Rokeach believes that the number of terminal values of a person is not high, but about 15 and that of instrumental values about 75.⁸ He means to say that the goals people seriously set for themselves and strive after may be about

8. Rokeach, op. cit., p. 11

15 and for realizing each of them they have to adopt certain preferred ways of conduct as means. For example, one who wants to be happy (terminal value) will have to make a reasonable sum of money, foster satisfactorily good health, maintain good relations with others etc., all of which assume the status of instrumental values in this context.

Further, values may be *personal* and *social*. Personal values are intra-personal values of the individual like health, peace of mind, salvation, etc. Social values are interpersonal values focusing on the community and wider society. World peace, brotherhood, social justice etc. are good examples. Evidently, people differ in the importance and emphasis they place on various values. Some may be one-sidedly concerned about certain personal values while others may be equally or more concerned about social values. The difference of course reflects in their actual conduct. Still another division of values according to Rokeach is into *moral* and *competence* values. Moral values refer mainly to certain modes of conduct which have an interpersonal focus and their violation arouses pricks of conscience or pangs of guilt for wrongdoing. Competence values on the other hand are more personal, focusing on the self-actualization of the person and failure in maintaining them leads to feelings of shame and inadequacy⁹ rather than feelings of guilt. W. Frankena considers the distinction of values into *moral* and *non-moral* to be very important. Moral values refer to morally good or virtuous character and dispositions of persons, while non-moral values refer to the utility, instrumentality or similar property of various sorts of things and objects for attaining some ends.¹⁰

Speaking about different kinds of values which exert influence on people's lives and decisions, Allport following E. Spranger and C. W. Williams gives six basic value orientations. Each of these orientations may be considered a "value-type". Actual people may not fit into any of them perfectly, but rather share in these values in varying degrees. In other words, "Human life... harbors six main types of value, and these appeal in varying degrees to individuals who build the unity of their lives around them"¹¹. The basic orientations (or value-typology) are the following.

9. Ibidem, p. 8. 10. W. K. Frankena, *Ethics*, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 52, 82

11 Allport, op. cit., p. 296

(1) *Theoretical*. The dominant interest or the most preferred concern of this type is the *discovery of truth*. Their life and activities will be largely devoted to acquire and systematize knowledge. Usually, intellectuals, scientists and philosophers are predominantly of this type. (2) *The economic*. This type is preoccupied with *what is useful*. It is basically founded on the satisfaction of bodily needs and from there it extends to the practical affairs of producing, distributing and consuming goods as well as accumulating wealth. They want everything to be practical and useful, including education, arts etc. They will have no difficulty in ploughing down a beautiful hill-side or denuding a locality of its luxuriant vegetation to build an economic empire. They tend to rate people on their wealth, business prowess, etc. Their religion may be worship of Mammon; if they believe in a traditional God, they are likely to consider him as the giver of wealth and material blessings. A typical business-man fits this type. (3) *The aesthetic*. The prevailing interest of this orientation is *form, harmony and beauty*. People of this value-orientation are very much concerned about art, artistic expressions and creations. They all may not be creative artists, but tend to cherish and appreciate the significance of whatever is beautiful in events, experience, person, nature, etc. The aesthetic will find the production-consumption crave of the economic type unbearable. For them, 'to make a thing charming is million times more important than to make it true'. (4) *The social*. The dominant characteristic of the social type is *love of people*. They prize other persons as ends, having worth and value in themselves. Therefore, they respect others, one and all. They are kind, sympathetic and selfless. Their love takes various fitting forms like friendly, conjugal, filial and philanthropic. (5) *The political*. The primary concern of the political type is *power*. Their strive is to get power, exercise it over others and maintain it. Competition and struggle for power is very much part of his life. Though politicians and power-seekers in politics usually belong to this group, the 'political type' need not be always in conventional politics. They may very well be in other fields; wherever they are, the hunger for power and authority and its exercise over others will be quite manifest in their lives. (6) *The religious*. The greatest concern of the religious type is called *unity*, in the sense of finding meaning in and for the whole cosmos. They may find it in the

divine reality and seek to be united with it by means of various religious and ascetic practices (transcendental mysticism) or may find the realization of their value in the 'affirmation of life and in active participation therein' (immanent mysticism).¹²

The above typology of Allport is considered by some to be very optimistic about human persons who in actuality seem to be a lot more utilitarian and hedonistic than the typology presumes. Further, the categorization seems to be very broad, each type allowing room for many specific values. The social, for example, includes several moral values. However, the typologies serve as tools to put some order into the complex field of values and to understand at least in a broad way the behavioural expressions of the value-orientations of people.

The Basis of Values

Where do values come from? is a relevant question. Psychologists largely tend to see needs as the bases of values. "A value is well defined as an endeavour which satisfies need system, psychological and physiological".¹³ Almost all human beings have the same physiological needs, but they differ in their psychological needs and hence there will be differences in the values and life-styles, adds Ruhela. Maslow says that the gratification of any human need — emotional, cognitive, expressive and aesthetic needs — is a value. This is true of the love of safety as it is of the love of truth, or of certainty.¹⁴ Several others like Murray, White, French and Kahn consider needs and values as equivalents or as having several common properties.¹⁵ A need usually refers to a state of the organism involving some deficiency or an urge to exercise some of its potential. Whether a deficiency or an urge, a need usually creates in the organism a drive to some specific activity. Hunger and thirst which are deficiency situations are satisfied by eating and drinking which in turn bring about satiation and comfort. Therefore, food/eating and drink/drinking are easily liked, desired and valued by people. After a long time of inactivity one feels bored and some kind of sporting gives one a fresh sense of agility and fitness and one comes to like and value

12. Ibidem, p. 297–299

13. Ruhela S. P. (Ed.), *Human Values and Education*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 11

14. *Motivation and Personality*. New York, 1970. p. 6

15. Rokeach. op. cit., p. 19

that sport. Thus it is not difficult to see that needs and values are closely related and how one comes to believe that values are just born out of needs. Rulla who defines needs as "action tendencies resulting from a deficit of the organism or from natural inherent potentialities which seek exercise or actuality"¹⁶ says that needs are not values. At the same time he admits their close relationship when he says "By trying to find a satisfaction for his needs every man develops his own attitudes, values and interests through the interaction of his inherent action tendencies and his environment".¹⁷ Rokeach also does not simply equate needs and values. He notes "If values are indeed equivalent to needs ... then the lowly rat, to the extent that it can be said to possess needs, should to the same extent also be said to possess values. If such a view were adopted, it would be difficult to account for the fact that values are so much at the center of attention among those concerned with the understanding of human behaviour and so little at the center of attention among those concerned with the understanding of animal behaviour. That values are regarded to be so much central in the one case than in the other suggest that values cannot altogether be identical to needs and perhaps values possess some attributes that needs do not".¹⁸ It is quite true that we do not attribute values to the animal way of life. Possession of values and value-system is characteristic of the human, distinguishing him/her from the infra-human. In short, both the human and animal have needs, but only the human has a sense of values.

Rokeach places the difference between needs and values in this that "values are the cognitive representations and transformations of needs, and man is the only animal capable of such representations and transformations".¹⁹ Only the human is capable of cognitive-symbolic representation and transformation, and Rokeach seems to say that when a need is so transformed it becomes a value. He adds that it is not only the individual needs that are cognitively transformed into values, but also societal and institutional demands. Because through the process of socialization the individual shares and internalizes society's conceptions about what are desirable or the common good. These are then transformed into values. Once such needs and demands are

16. *Depth Psychology and Vocation*, Rome, 1971, p. 31

17. *Ibidem*, p. 39

18. *The Nature of Human Values*, p. 20

19. *Idem*

cognitively transformed into values, they can be defended, justified, advocated and exhorted as personally and socially desirable.²⁰

Needs-Meaning-Values

However, there seems to be something more to values than just cognitive representation and transformation of needs. Needs refer primarily to the requirements of the individual/organism for its survival, smooth functioning and comfort. The satisfaction of needs gives relief, pleasure, enjoyment etc., depending on the situation, and therefore it becomes desirable. Values refer primarily to ideal states of being or modes of conduct which are appropriate for a human being. They are "covetables" to the individual because of their meaning and significance to him / her as a human person, and to his / her integral self-realization as a physico-psycho-spiritual entity. What the realization of a value therefore gives is a sense of fitness, propriety and meaningfulness in terms of the personal nature, call and goal of the human. We may say that a need (satisfaction) enables a person to live while a value is something for the sake of which a person lives. Hence the "desirability" of need-satisfaction and that of value-realization may be closely associated, but are not the same. It is not any kind of need-satisfaction, but a meaningful need-satisfaction that possesses the property of a value and becomes humanly fulfilling and even elevating. A diabetic's eating of sweet-meat may be a need-satisfaction, but it cannot be considered a value-realization because in the given situation that eating is not meaningful or humanly fulfilling. However, if s/he does so in a situation where no other food is available so that otherwise s/he has to starve and die, then the eating becomes a need-satisfaction as well as a value.

What is to say then about a person who desires and prefers a 'meaningless mode' of need-satisfaction, as the diabetic eating sweet-meat. If s/he does so, knowing about the meaninglessness of the action, s/he must be violating her/his own meaning-value system or the system may be in transition. It can so happen sometimes also because the person is not aware of the subtle difference between meaningful and meaningless modes of satisfaction (which can happen in the case of an illiterate diabetic). However, the

20. Idem

so-called "meaningless mode of need-satisfaction" may not be so meaningless to the person concerned because of the particular meaning-value system s/he holds, as in the case of a diabetic patient who prefers an earlier death to prolonged suffering and hence eats a lot of sweet-meat to accelerate death. Though here it is not a meaningless action as far as the person is concerned, it may be judged as meaningless (and hence contra-value) by others from the perspective of other/higher values. This points towards the importance of a sound hierarchy of values.

Needs-Values Hierarchies

The thinking and findings of Brian Hall and associates emphasize the role of 'meaning' in need satisfaction. "The fundamental human motivation is the search for meaning... [The human being] can never rest content simply with biological satisfactions. He is for ever disturbed by needs that are alien to animal existence. His real longing is for meaning, and whether he recognizes it or not, his striving, whatever its apparent object, is directed towards the enlargement and deepening of meaning."²¹ Probably no other psychologist / psychiatrist understood the significance of 'meaning' in human life and action so well as V. Frankl who founded his psychotherapy on "the will to meaning" (rather than on "the will to pleasure") and said "Man, however, is able to live and even die for his ideals and values".²²

We find meaning when we feel at home in the world and in the environment around us and integrate ourselves into it through humanly fulfilling interaction with it. However, finding meaning is part of the developmental process. "As the human organism develops from infancy to maturity, there is a corresponding development of consciousness, and as consciousness develops, the organism becomes aware of an increasingly wide range of needs and value options".²³ Through appropriate satisfaction of the primary needs for affection, warmth and succour, the child internalizes the basic values of self-preservation and security. Gradually, values like belongingness, self-competence and self-worth are experienced and internalized through interaction

21. B. Hall and others, *Readings in Value Development*, New Jersey, 1982, p. 53

22. V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, New York, 1963. p. 155

23. Hall, op. cit., p. 38

with a person-affirming and talent-fostering environment. Then the individual begins to find the various aspects of self-actualization meaningful and is attracted to the corresponding values like autonomy, being self and growing, responsibility as well as justice, interdependence, harmony (synergy) etc. Those who value self-actualization foster actualization of being also in others by reinforcing environments that allow others become themselves and grow²⁴.

Those who are familiar with [the motivation theory of A. Maslow will have already noted the affinity of what has been said above with that theory. Maslow has proposed a five-layered hierarchy of motivation based on five categories of needs, beginning with the basic physiological needs (oxygen, food, drink, etc.) going through safety needs (security, stability, freedom from danger, etc.), love needs (belongingness, affection, companionship etc.), esteem needs (achievement, self-esteem, reputation etc.) and culminating in self-actualization needs (to become fully what one is capable of).²⁵ A reasonable satisfaction of the lower needs, especially the first two categories, is necessary for survival. Once that is assured, the individual moves towards the third which is required for smooth, healthy life and functioning. A total deprivation of it can be fatal. These three types indicate the deficiency of the organism / individual, and they 'operate' to fill up the deficiency. Hence they are called 'deficiency needs'. The esteem needs motivate the individual to cultivate his talents and use them constructively so that he gains recognition and significance. Finally, the self-actualization tendency motivates the individual to grow and actualize himself fully in his unique way. These two categories, particularly the last, are therefore called 'growth needs'. All these are human needs and their satisfactions, on the whole, are appropriate and meaningful for human life and functioning (though there can be particular inappropriate modes of satisfying them) and hence are valuable.

However, it is not difficult to see that the higher needs are specifically more human and their satisfaction, as a rule, humanly more significant. Therefore, they would be higher on the scale

24. Ibidem, pp. 62-64

25. Maslow, op. cit., pp. 35ff

of human values. Who would deny that an outstanding scientific achievement or a life totally dedicated to humanitarian service is humanly more meaningful and significant than eating sumptuous meals or having a secure future, and hence more valuable? Maslow also refers to "self-actualization both as a need and as a higher order value".²⁶ Thus according to Maslow, need and value seem to converge at the zenith. We however do not think that this is because need and value or need-satisfaction and value-realization are simply identified at this level, but because the higher category of needs are, by their nature, more humane and humanly significant so that their satisfaction can quite meaningfully become the object of human ideals and aspirations (though here again there can be particular meaningless modes of satisfaction). Besides, those who live and function at the highest level of needs are usually people who have reasonable satisfaction of and control over the potent lower needs. Therefore, in them the 'push and pull' for meaningless ways of satisfying the highest needs is usually much less.²⁷

Primacy of meaning

Now it must also be noted that though need and value are often closely associated, they need not always have such a one-to-one relationship. Hungry persons need food; but if such persons fast (say, for a religious purpose) they are not satisfying their basic biological need, but acting on their value. It may be argued that they are satisfying a spiritual need of theirs. However, this is not easy because as Maslow also agrees the biological need cannot be subdued by the spiritual need because the former is much stronger than the latter. It is easier to understand that fasting in this case is influenced by the *value* these persons find in it, namely its self-disciplinary and purificatory effect, which may help them for a better union with God which in the given situation they consider more meaningful and significant than satisfying the biological need. As for values, those higher in the hierarchy normally exert more motivating force than lower ones.

The need-based hierarchy of Maslow seems to be true only in situations of very serious deprivation. As Maslow says, when an individual is very seriously deprived of food, safety, love and

26. Cfr. Rokaach, *The Nature of Human Values*, p. 19

27. Cfr. also Maslow, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-100

esteem, s/he would more strongly desire to have food than anything else.²⁸ But apart from such critical situations, there are ever so many situations where Maslow's hierarchy does not work strictly or consistently. There are many who quite willingly semi-starve for the sake of their pursuits give up the available safety and security for the sake of their love, risk health and life for recognition and esteem, reduce all need-satisfactions to the minimum for fostering spiritual life (strive for self-transcendence rather than self-actualization), give up life for their faith, and so on. They do so not because the hierarchically higher needs are more potent than the lower ones, but because of the meaningfulness and significance they find in those choices than in their opposites, that is, because of the values realizable through those choices. *So, what is at work in such situations is a value-based hierarchy than a need-based one.* Even the choice to satisfy the basic physiological need in a situation of equal deprivation of several needs, mentioned above, is a value-oriented choice because ensuring the survival of the individual is the most meaningful thing to do in such a situation. Again, in ordinary life situations, i. e., when there is no special emergency or severe deprivation of a basic need, various people seem to strive for various higher needs without being bound by the hierarchical order of needs and that is so because, we believe, people are guided by their hierarchy of values. Therefore, even in satisfying their needs human persons tend to be guided by their sense of meaning and value. *That is values seem to regulate their hierarchy of needs rather than the hierarchy of needs dictating their values.* Hence, the influence of 'value system' upon the life and choices of a person. All have their values, but the question is about their priorities and hierarchies of values.

II

Moral Values

In common understanding 'moral values' refer to those values which have the realization of moral good as their objective. *Moral good means the integral good of the human person, of every person, and of the community of persons.* It entails respecting and promoting the dignity and worth of every human

28. Ibidem, p. 37

person, which consists in his/her being a physico-psycho-spiritual entity and is founded on his/her essential relationships — relationship with God who sustains, with other human persons who support and the environment which nourishes him/her. *The human person is the only creature on earth whom God has created for its own sake.*²⁹ This statement underscores the dignity and worth of the human person as an end in himself/herself. All reasonable people, irrespective of caste, creed or race, would accept the unique worth and value of the human. After all, among all creatures and creations in this world what is more noble and valuable than the human person? Respecting and promoting this 'dignified humanity' concretized in every human person and the rights which flow from this humanity is the core of moral values. Therefore, every act of genuine respect, concern, care, service, empathy, sympathy, kindness and compassion — all of which may be subsumed under love — for another is itself a noble act and definitely preferable to its opposite. Because of his/her inherent dignity, no human person may be considered or treated as a means for the comfort, convenience, pleasure or profit of anybody or any system. The various moral laws and norms — like do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not cheat, do not breach fidelity and commitment etc. — are in fact the basic minima meant to protect and promote the good of the human person and the community of persons.

A special characteristic of the moral values, in contrast to other types of values, is their *categoricity and universality*. A person, for example, is free to choose a particular field of activity, e.g., music, as a value and devote much of his time and energy to it disregarding other equally good fields open to him. The choice so to say is left to his good pleasure. But we cannot say the same with regard to moral values (and the norms which flow from them). It is not left to our good pleasure to kill or not to kill, to cheat or not to cheat etc. We are obliged to follow such moral laws whether we like it or not; they impose, as it is said, categorical obligation. The most basic duty of the human (as that of any being) is to strive for his own perfection and realization. The norms and guidelines for this strive are founded on the very personal nature of the human, including his essential relationships mentioned above.

29 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992, art. 1703

Not striving for this realization is to frustrate one's own being and to render one's life ultimately meaningless. From this flows the significance as well as the categorical nature of moral values. Besides, since all human beings, as persons, are equal and endowed with the same dignity and the same fundamental rights, all are bound by the same basic moral values and principles associated with them. Hence, their universality.

Consequently, moral values have the pride of place among all values and a sound hierarchy of values should be topped by moral values. Therefore, human endeavours and enterprises in any field—scientific, literary, artistic, economic, commercial, social, political, religious etc. — which may involve some value or other, are to be 'evaluated', that is, assessed for their 'human worth and propriety' by their respect for and compliance with the moral values.

Moral Development

A look into the process of value-acquisition and moral development is useful in this context. Of the many studies, researches and theories formulated about moral development in the last half-a-century, L. Kohlberg's theory³⁰ is probably the most known, comprehensive and useful, despite certain criticisms. "Kohlberg has provided the clearest and best-researched account of the development of the intellectual or cognitive component of interpersonal relationships that is yet available³¹ and that is still true. Hence, we look at moral development chiefly from the perspective of Kohlberg's theory. Kohlberg focuses on the 'how and why' of moral judgement rather than on the 'what' of it. It does not speak about the various values an individual should acquire during the different stages of growth, but speaks about

30. Kohlberg's writings about his research and theory were formerly scattered in several psychological journals. But now the important ones are available in the following two volumes. L. Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development*, Vol. 1, *The Philosophy of Moral Development*, New York, 1981, Vol. 2, *The Psychology of Moral Development*, New York, 1984

31. B. Kiely, *Psychology and Moral Theology*, Rome, 1980, p. 46. Those interested in further study of Kohlberg's theory and its comparison with other relevant theories may usefully refer, besides Kiely's work, R. Duska and M. Whelan, *Moral Development*, Dublin 1977, G. J. Mathias, *Moral Development and Psycho-Social Development*, Rome, 1987, and T. Srampickal, *The Concept of Conscience* Innsbruck, 1977.

the different modes of conceiving and thinking about moral values through the course of development. It is not concerned with what honesty, fidelity, altruism etc., are, but why or how one comes to understand and appreciate them as (moral) values. The theory thus throws light on the factors and processes which shape our very ideas of moral values and the associated motives for acting according to them.

Levels and Stages of Moral Development

In the light of his studies, Kohlberg originally distinguished three levels of moral development, known as 1) pre-conventional (till about the age of 10); 2) conventional (between the ages of 10 and 17); and 3) post-conventional (which begins about the age of 17 and continues into adulthood) levels. Each level is further divided into 2 stages, giving rise to a total of 6 stages. At each level, the earlier stage dominates first, gradually yielding place to the later stage. A very brief presentation of each stage with its essential characteristics, required for the purpose of this discussion, is given below.

In the first stage, called 'punishment avoidance stage' which dominates more or less between 4 and 7 years of age, the child conceives 'moral good and bad' of an action in terms of its physical consequences. For the young child of this age, punishment and pain are naturally bad consequences. Hence, it conceives punished and punishable activities as 'bad', while those that do not invite punishment are considered 'good'. In short, 'physical good' is equated with 'moral good' here and fear generates the moral values. Hence, the morality of this stage may be called 'fear morality'. In the second stage, called 'individualist instrumental hedonism' which prevails about 7 to 10 years of age, good is what is instrumental to the satisfaction of one's needs, and the opposite is bad. Need satisfaction (and the ensuing pleasure) is the motivating force for moral behaviour at this stage. Relationships and exchanges are understood in terms of each other's need satisfaction. This may be qualified as 'hedonistic morality'. The third stage is that of 'interpersonal expectations and conformity'. Now the child's idea of good and bad is shaped by the expectations of those who are emotionally close and significant (e. g. parents, peers, teachers etc.) to him. Their approval is important for him and therefore he conforms to their expectations. What they

approve is good and the opposite is bad. Kohlberg calls this "good boy-nice girl" orientation. This may be characterized as 'sentimental morality'.

The fourth is 'law and order' stage. Now the individual feels the need of something more objective than personal relationships as the source of moral good and bad. He comes to perceive authority, law and social order as that source. Therefore, good is what is in conformity with law and authority. Obedience to proper authority and doing one's duty according to law is the epitome of all goodness, and its contrary is bad. This can be labelled as 'authoritarian or legal' morality. The fifth is 'social contract and utility' stage for which the basis of moral good is promotion of common good and well-being, which includes also the good of the individuals. Laws and rules are made/modified by the consensus of the community as a whole for the sake of common weal. Hence, actions which foster common good are morally good and their opposites morally bad. This may be qualified as 'social morality'. The final stage is that of 'universal ethical principles'. Now the individual becomes capable of understanding for himself the equal dignity and rights of all human persons and the duty to respect those rights. Consequently, good is what respects the rights of other persons, every other person, and bad is to infringe that right in one way or another. Since this is as self-chosen morality enlightened by universal ethical principles, this may be called personalized, autonomous or principled morality.

The above pattern shows that the moral orientations of an individual are very 'immature' in the early stages, when the motives for his actions and, in fact, what he comes to perceive as good or bad (i.e., the content of morality) are dictated by selfish considerations and external agencies, though there is improvement as the child grows up stage by stage. For example, good or bad for the first stage depends on what the parents or other punishing agencies do not punish or do punish, and the child does the good and avoids the evil to avert the punishment coming from such agencies. Such purely physical and negative orientation is however superseded in the second stage by something positive like need-satisfaction and pleasure, and the agencies satisfying the needs become the major shapers of the morality of the child. The third stage shows further growth in as far as it is guided by warm relationships

with some other people and their approval. This is transcended in the fourth stage where something more objective and less sentimental like law, authority figures and their approval become key factors. Hence, these 4 stages are highly susceptible to external influences and manipulations, particularly the 2nd and the 3rd stages (prevailing more or less between the ages of 7 and 15) which are dominated by hedonistic self-seeking and sentimental relationships. It is in the 5th stage, when the individual's moral outlook begins to be guided by a more abstract idea of 'common good', that his/her morality becomes more free from such external influences and selfish considerations. And in the 6th stage, when the motive is properly 'interiorized' and the objective (universal) demands of the dignity and rights of individual persons dictate the content of moral behaviour, we can say that one's moral orientation has become 'personalized and person-oriented' and thus humanly mature, and consequently not easily swayed by selfish interests and external pressures. However, the process of attaining such moral maturity, comprising progressive personalization of motive and person-based universalization of content is not smooth and easy. This leads us to the question of factors affecting moral development.

Factors Influencing Development

Moral development supposes in the child a corresponding intellectual development without which no moral thinking and reasoning would be possible. Granted that, development results from the interaction between the individual and his socio-moral environment, which usually includes opportunities for various types of role-taking and interaction. The environment, however, is ideally conducive to development only if it can challenge the existing moral orientation of the child by providing him/her with the moral thinking, orientation and experience of the next higher stage, because any one at a given stage is ideally disposed to grow towards the next higher stage. This also means that development is sequential, that is, one has to pass through the stages in order, without skipping any one of them. Thus, for example, the development of a first stager, who thinks in terms of physical consequences and punishment, will be fostered if s/he encounters and is challenged by the second stage of moral thinking and orientation of need satisfaction. S/He should also experience the association between need satisfaction and good behaviour in

his/her actual interactions and role-takings. Encountering the secondstage thinking and corresponding experience together 'pulls' him/her towards that stage. To promote him/her then to the third stage, s/he should meet with the thirdstage thinking (relationship with and approval of one higher) and corresponding action/experience. On the contrary, if a second stager is deprived of the possibility of any positive, affective relationship with some body (as it can very well happen in the case of a boy from a broken family in a slum area, where no body is likely to love and care for him), his development is likely to be arrested because there is no third stage experience/material to stimulate his growth. Again, if a third stager is not sufficiently exposed to moral thinking and experience based on authority, law and obedience, s/he may not progress to the fourth stage. Similarly, development to any stage requires an encounter with the moral thinking and experience/action corresponding to that stage.

This implies that moral development can get arrested at any stage if the required stimulating thinking and experience is not provided or available, even if the individual grows intellectually and chronologically. The theory also reminds us that if one is strongly, consistently and for long exposed to one type of moral thinking and experience/action (without sufficient exposure to the next higher stage) one is likely to get rooted in that stage. Thus, a child living in a very punitive and frightening environment, another growing up in a very individualistic, hedonistic and utilitarian atmosphere, a third brought up in a very affectionate and well-knit family and a fourth living under strict, authoritarian parents might become life-long 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th staggers respectively. Similarly, people living and growing up under the closely guarded ideology that the promotion of 'common good and well-being as dictated by the state/society' is the true good and that everything, including personal rights, have to be subordinated to it, will mostly stagnate at the 5th stage without developing to the 6th.

Proper moral development requires also that one experiences a consistency between the moral thinking and the experience/action one encounters. For example, if one is conscientized about the need of authority, law etc., (4th stage), but in real life is expected/pressurized to act according to the pleasure of one higher (3rd stage), one's development to the

4th stage will not be easy or smooth because of the conflicting experience. Students and youngsters are often instructed about the importance of common good and the need of mutual understanding to promote the common good (5th stage), or about the significance of self-responsibility and the respect due to the personal rights of all people (6th stage). But in actual practice they are often required to act according to the prescriptions of law and authority (4th stage). Here again, their development to the higher stages, that is, 5th and 6th, will be slow and difficult. Often such youngsters are found to give 5th or 6th stage theoretical responses to problems and issues, but in actual behaviour they revert to the 4th stage.

Therefore, smooth and harmonious moral development and functioning supposes consistent 'theoretical exposures and practical experiences' conducive to forming in the growing individual a healthy and progressively maturing moral attitude — comprising cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions — which serves as the proximate basis for one's moral responses. In this context the socio-moral environment and experiences of a person gain great importance for his/her moral growth. During the course of development an individual encounters explicitly and implicitly a wide variety of moral reasonings and experiences at home, in the school, in peer groups, in religious circles, in the wider society and particularly in the mass media today. Some of them positively contribute to sound moral development while others do not and still others are counter-productive. It is here that the characteristics of a growing 'consumer culture' become a matter of concern.

III

Consumerism and Its Characteristics

The term 'consumerism' was first used, for example in the USA in the 1960s, to refer to a movement meant to protect the interests of consumers against the exploitative practices of business and industry³². But today it means the rapidly growing consumption tendency and style of people. Though this has been, till recently, the practice and privilege of the economically

32. R. Sooryamoorthy, "The Advent of Consumerism", in *Social Action*, vol. 46 (1996), p. 309

advanced western nations, now it has begun to conquer also the poor and developing nations.

Advance in science and technology enabled manufacturers to produce a wide variety of goods that satisfied not only the needs of people, but also their wants, curiosities and fantasies. The mass media extol certain qualities of these goods and project them as requirements for a life of status, style and comfort. Better job opportunities and more disposable income available at least to a section of the people (particularly middle and upper classes) enable them to buy these goods and enjoy them. The ready availability of these commodities in the recently born supermarkets and consumer stores makes the buying and consumption easier. Once people begin to enjoy certain benefits and comforts provided by these goods (like fast cooking, ready-made drinks, fast travel, effortless washing, multi-channeled colour TVs, etc., etc.) naturally they crave for more comforts and amenities. As Skinner has taught us, the more we satisfy a crave the stronger it becomes. Another motive that creeps in and strengthens the 'consumer behaviour' of people is status consciousness. People come to believe that the possession and use/consumption of certain goods is the sign of a given social class and status. Achieving, maintaining and then improving that status becomes a great concern of people, which in turn entails consumption of correspondingly costlier goods. Here the lower class looks up to the middle class as its target, the middle class sees the upper class as its model and the upper class looks up to the very rich³³. Besides, people with low self-esteem might try to compensate their sense of inferiority by possessing and consuming costly goods. Various not-so-solid reasons thus promote the consumer tendency and practice of people. Hence, consumerism may be described as an attitude and practice of consumption, influenced not so much by genuine need but "predominantly by the aspirations of consumers for a better standard of living and as a means of vertical social mobility".³⁴

When such a practice becomes a dominant feature of the life-style of a sizable section of people in a society/nation and also exerts its influence on other sections to go along the same way, that life-style, we believe, can be legitimately called

33. Ibidem, pp. 319-320

34. Ibidem, p. 309

consumer lifestyle and the pervading atmosphere or ethos may be qualified as 'consumer culture'. There is no doubt that India is fast becoming a consumer culture, some areas faster than others. Even the poor who cannot afford such a life-style are enticed (and frustrated) by it. Evidently, the economic liberation, the advent of the MNCs, the fast and vast communication network and the advertising industry³⁵ also promote it.

Certain dominant features of consumer culture which deserve attention, particularly from the ethical point of view can be easily deciphered. It is dominantly a hedonistic culture, seeking to enjoy more pleasure and comfort by consuming more and more. Pleasure and comfort is seen as the very purpose of life. Human well-being, status and dignity are primarily measured by the material goods one possesses. Quality of being is equated with the comfort and pleasure provided by the quantity/cost of consumption. Because each one is preoccupied with acquiring what contributes to one's (and probably also of those closest to one) comfort and status, it becomes an individualist and competitive culture, where might tends to become right. All those who cannot afford to go along with the 'consumer current' are automatically alienated and segregated as 'lower class people'. There would not be any qualm of conscience to trample upon others' rights and even to abuse other people as means of one's pleasure and enjoyment. "Make money anyway and enjoy life" becomes the simple philosophy of life. In such a culture, moral values like honesty, justice, fidelity, chastity, respect for life and persons, altruism and love get little consideration and exert little influence on the life and choices of people. Various forms of injustice and dishonesty like corruption, exploitation, scams, nepotism etc., become rampant at different levels, particularly among the powerful and the influential, which makes it practically impossible to take any effective remedies against them. While hypocrisy and sycophancy thrive in this system, honesty and integrity will be sacrificed.

35. We do not mean to say that economic liberalization etc., are all bad in themselves; they have their positive sides too. The focus of our consideration however is consumerism, which is an attitude and life-style developed by people, to which liberal economy, advertising industry etc., do contribute.

Consumerism, preoccupied with creating and enjoying "a heaven of material goods on the earth" does not foster any true religious or spiritual values. It is concerned with immediate satisfaction, comfort and pleasure and that too largely at the physiological and emotional levels. Questions about higher human strivings and aspirations, about the meaning and purpose of human life etc., are simply ignored, thus creating a split between the higher and the lower dimensions of human existence as well as a vacuum in humans, who are basically also moral-spiritual beings. This vacuum unleashes in them an unrest, confusion and guilt which persuade them to engage in various expiatory measures, including participation in religious/spiritual activities and programmes. The danger of looking at 'spiritual helps' just as another type of commodity for achieving temporary consolation and peace need not be ruled out. And those catering to the needs of such people thronging to various "spiritual centres" could be strongly tempted, unless very careful and discerning, to employ business strategies like propaganda, publicity (advertisement), manipulation, etc., to attract more 'customers and clients', to enhance the 'sale of their commodities' and to augment the name, fame and income of their centres, thus promoting a parallel *spiritual consumerism* which will be a worse malady.

The consumerist hierarchy of values is evidently headed by material and utilitarian values; it is basically a pleasure-seeking culture. Once contracted, it infects the whole life style/culture, aided and abetted by the agencies who reap its abundant fruits. According to Kohlberg's pattern of development, consumer morality is dominantly the second stage morality — a morality of children between 7 and 10 years of age—characterized by selfish, utilitarian and hedonistic orientations. We have already seen that if a person/people/generation is dominantly and long enough exposed to a particular type of moral thinking and experience, their moral growth is likely to be arrested at that stage. Hence the danger that a 'consumer generation', constantly exposed to consumerist thinking, ideology, propaganda and models in real life and on the media, might get arrested at the second stage of moral development. It would be a far cry from the mature morality of the one who respects the dignity and rights of every person, and still farther from the moral orientation of a mature christian who is supposed to be ready to love and care for the other in a

most unselfish way, surrendering his rights and even life, according to the model of Jesus.³⁶ It is true that all adults, even all educated adults, do not develop to the final — 6th and 7th — stages; many may get stuck up at the 4th or 5th stage. However, to be dominated by the 2nd stage, as consumer culture is, is a symptom of moral stagnation, regression and degradation. If a people have no greater principle to live by than the satisfaction of self, without any regard for the pain and happiness of others, their future as a culture or nation is definitely bleak. The words of N. Gingrich, the speaker of the US house of Representatives are quite relevant: "American civilization cannot survive with 12 year olds having babies, 15 year olds shooting one another, 17 year olds dying of AIDS and 18 year olds graduating with diplomas they cannot read".³⁷ The stronger the consumerist tendency, the deeper and more pervading the symptoms!

Checking the unbridled march of consumer culture (a topic outside the purview of the paper) is a duty of all, concerned with the good of the future generations. Very important in this context is a concerted effort at conscientizing people, especially the growing generations, about the basic spiritual dimension of the human being, the need to be guided by genuine human and moral values for an authentic human life as well as becoming good life models for them. While appreciating and gratefully accepting the genuine contributions of science and theology and working for a 'better quality of life', it is important to be convinced that the quality of human life is gauged not just by material consumption and self-satisfaction, but also by the enrichment of the spirit and concern for the well-being of the other. The idea that "culture is what makes life more bearable for another" could be a good tool to critique the merits and demerits of any passing culture or life-style.

36. Though there are only six main stages ("hard stages" as Kohlberg calls them) in moral development, an individual, after attaining the 6th stage, may be further guided in moral reasoning by his/her religious faith or metaethical beliefs, thus giving rise to a 7th ("soft") stage of religious orientation. Thus, a mature christian while respecting the rights of another, may, motivated by his/her faith, so selflessly care for another that he forgoes his own rights. This stage, says Kohlberg, presupposes but goes beyond the 6th stage of justice and rights. See, *Psychology of Moral Development*, pp. 249-250.

37. *Time*, 25 December 1995, p. 43

Ethics from the Perspective of Tribals

Thomas Pulloppillil

Here is a brief presentation of the ethico-spiritual values and virtues of tribal cultures, particularly from the North-East of India, less affected by the consumerist and transnational inroads.

Dr. T. Pulloppillil, professor of moral theology, can be contacted at Archbishop's house, Guwahati – 781 001, Assam, India.

'Little traditions' are often ignored and forgotten especially in the context of overarching philosophies and religions. North East of India, is no exception to this. As dialogue with the world's great religions is pursued after the Second Vatican Council, it is important that dialogue with indigenous religions should be given due attention. It would provide new insights for Christians in areas of ecology, community, and celebration of life's joys and tragedies. As *Nostra Aetate*¹ declares, the Church acknowledges, preserves and encourages spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians. This paper is an attempt to probe into various tribal values which would serve as a starting point for a tribal moral theology. Before we identify such values, an inquiry into what culture means is appropriate as the culture embodies spiritual and moral values and all that a tribe or people are.

Ethics and Values

Law is about what is right. Ethics is about what is good; morality is concerned with how we ought to behave (normative ethics). Whatever is perfect is good and therefore evokes a willed response of love, complacency or desire. A value on the other hand is that which is prized, esteemed or thought to have some worth by a human agent. e.g., food is good for the human whether s/he knows or admits it. Values require one's consciousness, estimation and choice. A value stands in relation to an accepted goal. The more a being contributes to its goal the greater value it has.²

1. *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2

2. Paul M. Quay, "Morality by calculation of values", in Charles Curran and Richard McCormick, (eds.), *Readings in Moral Theology, No. 1*, New York, Paulist Press, 1979, p. 267

Thus, an understanding of values leads to an understanding of what is good. And ethics is about what is good and bad. A search for a tribal ethics therefore has to begin from an inquiry of the tribal values.

Culture

What is culture? Etymologically speaking, the word 'culture' like the word 'cult' derives from the Latin *colere*, meaning to cultivate, to worship. In Latin the nouns from *colere* are *cultura* and *cultus*. When applied to the soil, to the plants and to the animals, culture meant agriculture; when applied to human beings it meant education and refinement; and when applied to the gods it meant worship³. The first one to develop on this idea of culture was the German scholar, Gustav Klemm (1802-1867). He explained culture as containing customs, information and skills, domestic and public life in peace and war, religion, science and art. In 1871, E. B. Tylor⁴ gave a formal and explicit definition of this concept in his book: *Primitive Culture*. According to him, 'Culture or civilisation, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by the human as a member of society.' This definition found wide acceptance among the Anthropologists and was considered significant in the evolution of the understanding of culture.

Clifford Geertz's definition of culture has become influential in recent times. He has defined culture as "a set of symbols, stories (myths) and norms for conduct that orient a society or group cognitively, affectively and behaviourally to the world in which it lives".⁵ Culture could be described as a group's own representation of the past and its plan for the future, its typical institutions and creations, its habits and beliefs, its characteristic attitudes and behaviour patterns, its original mode of communicating, working, celebrating, and creating the techniques and

3. J. V. Ferreira. "The Role of culture in society. the Economy and Polity", in *Caritas*, 2 (1995), p. 12

4. Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, London, John Murray, 1871, p. 1. See also H. Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures from Leo XIII to John Paul II*, Trans. John Drury, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Duquesne University Press, 1980, p. 6; L. J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*, New York, Orbis Books, 1990, p. 134

5. Cf. C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York, 1973. p. 86

works that reveal its soul and its ultimate values. Culture is the typical mentality adopted by every individual who identifies with a collectivity; it is the human heritage transmitted from generation to generation. Every community enjoying a certain permanence possesses a culture of its own: a nation, a region, a tribe, or a specific social category such as youth or the working class.⁶

Among the elements to which we become heir at birth are the particular operative values of our culture. These give form and substance to our sense of value. We cannot know ourselves unless we also know our culture. We cannot examine our conscience in any depth unless we first bring to consciousness the specific values our culture holds. For our culture, like it or not, is part of us; and the more we disown that fact or refuse to take it into consideration the more we shall fail to see who we are and what we are about.⁷

In today's world, culture has three meanings. One is the older classic or humanist meaning that we apply to "cultured persons". A second is the modern anthropological meaning we use to designate the collective psychology and typical lifestyles of a human group. The third is what Clifford Geertz's definition conveys: the value system that every culture creates through a set of symbols and myths.

Evolution of Culture⁸

Culture is in the process of change and growth. Today every culture is undergoing profound change as never before. A living culture while it looks back to the past, constantly turns towards the future.

Culture and religion are closely related. In fact, the centrality of religion in culture is widely accepted and relation between decline in religion and chaos in cultural life is established. So too culture and social structures are considered to be different abstractions of the same phenomenon. Economy and polity are cultural creations.

6. Herve Carrier, op. cit., pp. 4-5

7. Thomas F. Schindler, *Ethics: The Social Dimension. Individualism and the Catholic Tradition*, Wilmington, Delaware, Michael Glazier, 1989, p. 160

8. Herve Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures from Leo XIII to John Paul II*, Trans. by John Drury, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Duquesne University Press, 1980, p. 84. Also cf. Louis J. Luzbetak, op. cit., pp. 293-374

As far as the tribals are concerned folklore (all the knowledge, beliefs, habits, etc. of a racial or national group, still preserved by memory, by folk tales, folk songs or in use from earlier and simpler times), is the most important form of knowledge of their culture for us.

Cultural & Spiritual values

Analysing the culture, folklore and world view one can draw certain conclusions. In the first place, tribals are a deeply religious people. There are no atheists among the tribal people—no proclaimers of Nietzsche's "God is dead" philosophy and none of the cultured despisers of religion that we find in the West.

Tribal people abound in virtues and goodness⁹ Some of the values that stand out among the tribals are the following:

1. Community orientedness: Tribals do not believe in any form of individualism. In the tribal society, clan and tribe are more important than the individual. Group activity always invokes good response. Even a casual visitor to the North East will not fail to notice that processions and other community celebrations like *Sabha* evoke very good response among the tribal Christians. Tribal-forms of spirituality is more of a community reaching spiritual maturity than individuals.

2. Family centeredness: Tribals believe in strong families. Tribal societies have very few marriage breakdowns (though those live in the cities are prone to such evils) and children are not considered to be a burden but a blessing. One would easily notice that the parents would forego a meal or a new dress but the children would not be deprived of these. The Church considers family as the primary cell of the community¹⁰ and the traditional tribal family bond should be further strengthened by the sacramental grace.

9. Archbishop Menampampil has recounted number of common characteristics of the tribals, some of which fall in this category. They are: [1] Community-centeredness; [2] Social dimension of private property; [3] A sense of equality; [4] Honesty; [5] Dignity of labour; [6] Love of parents for children; [7] Respect for elders. Cf. Thomas Menampampil. "Culture and evangelization", mimeographed notes given at *Seminar on Bodo Culture*, Social Forum, Guwahati, January 17-22, 1995. See also George Soares Prabhu, (ed.), "Tribal Values in the Bible", *Jeevadhara*, 24, 140 [March 1994]

10. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11; *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 42

3. Education and schooling: Tribals are progressive and value education. It is common experience that even poor parents would sacrifice the little comforts they enjoy but would send their children to English schools where fees have to be paid. Likewise adults appreciate teaching of religion; study of the Bible is done by people of all age groups. The ongoing formation of the laity in the region should take this into consideration.

4. Saving and frugality: Tribals believe in the virtues of saving and frugality. Even in interior villages people have money saved in gold or other forms. The Church should try to encourage the habit of saving and frugality and should aim at being self-sufficient and self-supporting.

5. Hard work: Tribals consider hard work a virtue. For example, when the British started tea gardens in Assam, they tried with various groups to work in the tea gardens but found the tribals from Chotanagpur to be the most ideal workers. The tribals do not believe in 'Charity'. The virtue of hard work should be tapped to help every tribal to stand on his own legs and to lead a life worthy of God's children.

6. Team-work: Tribals practice national teamwork. It is not uncommon to see Cabinet rank ministers and Members of Parliament working hand in hand with ordinary citizens at such community functions as annual procession or *sabha* in a parish. In the tribal societies, where egalitarianism holds sway, clericalism has no place. The priest should be a leader and animator and not authoritarian and autocratic.

7. Socially Oriented: There is a tribal version of social contract¹¹ between the people and the state. Whoever is the head of the tribe or the village has the duty to care for the entire village and tribe. Widows, orphans and old people are taken care of under this system. There are no beggars and destitution in tribal societies. The hierarchical Church should learn a lesson from the idea of a tribal version of social contract. The Church in a tribal society is not only a teaching Church but a caring Church as well.

8. Sharing and Caring: The tribals believe in the sharing of wealth. In times of need like natural calamities etc. such generosity comes to the fore: those who have saved essential commodities would easily share with

11. All forms of social contract begin from the idea of an original individualism, in which each human being lived for himself or herself, but agreed to surrender some of their 'natural rights', and thus society and social obligation were born. This should not be considered to be historical account but rather a parable. Rousseau and Hobbes could be said to be the originators of this theory.

the needy without counting the cost. As the tribals are generous with their material wealth, they share with others the greatest possession of all—faith in Jesus Christ. Evangelisation is not considered to be the duty of priests and the religious but of every Christian. It was the lay persons who established Churches first in many parts of the North East.

9. Eco-conscious: Tribals want their governments to maintain a morally wholesome environment in which to bring up their children. Thus we would hear that the Women's organisation conducts a prohibition drive or the students' body guards the forests from unscrupulous timber merchants etc. Even when the tribals use the forest, they do not destroy the forest but only depend on it. Tribals are eco-friendly and want integrity of God's creation. Eco-theology and creation theology will find a thriving ground among the tribals.

10. Free but faithfull: Tribals believe in liberty, but they do not believe that such freedom is an absolute right. Dance, for instance might take place the whole night, but always under the supervision of the village elders. Young girls may go to the village market but always in a group. In other words: free but faithful. The moral teaching should put more emphasis on this aspect of freedom with responsibility. The stress in moralising is not to what extent the laws are observed but with what responsibility laws are perceived and kept.

These values have special significance in theologising in the North East. A tribal theology of the North East thus should have the following dimensions.

Taken together, these 10 values form a framework that has enabled the tribals to survive against all odds. These values that are outstanding among the tribals could be the starting point for a tribal theology. Doing theology *in situ* should help to further probe into the riches of tribal culture and to make it part of the universal Church's heritage.

The ultimate goal of inculturation is mutual enrichment, one that benefits not only the local Christian community but the universal Church and the sending church as well. Even as the tribals benefit from the salvific message of Jesus, the Church—the bearer of this message benefits from the cultural and spiritual values of the tribals.

Transcultural Values and the Humanum: Towards a Global Ethics

George Therukattil

The global village is not safe and secure without a global ethics, the basis of which is the 'humanum', the core of authentic humanity, comprising the basic values, ideals and truths common to all cultures. The author shows that Levinas' philosophy which emphasizes the significance of the 'face-to-face' encounter between the other and the self provides a good theoretical basis for a global ethics. However, it should be inspired and sustained by religious convictions which alone can give ultimate meaning and motivation. Dr. G. Therukattil, professor at the Dept. of Christianity, Mysore University, can be contacted at Manasagangotri, Mysore- 570 006, Karnataka, India.

In the wake of modernity with its stupendous scientific and technological achievements, offering ease and quick mode of transportation and communication, there is an intense dialogue and encounter of different cultures. Cultural confrontations do take place. Today cultures and subcultures flow into each other interacting both visibly and invisibly, sometimes generating violence, sometimes peacefully and almost unconsciously accepting value trade-offs, eventually effecting value-rejection and value-modifications. A culture that does not react and change is dead.

Yet with the plurality of cultures and the consequent diversity of cultural values exhorting members of their respective cultures to live up to their demands, we have today cultural values of one culture contradicting and even antagonistic to one another. At the end of the twentieth century we have a world facing political injustices, outbreak of brutal violence and oppression, social and cultural disintegration and possible nuclear threat against the human race itself. We are living in a glorious age marked by great scientific achievements and cultural progress with moral regress, an age of brilliance without wisdom.

The Emerging Intercultural Situation

As a result of cultures being exposed to one another, there is also today the phenomena of universal interculturality with its proclaimed values. The cultural evolution of interculturality that is emerging today actually implies the dominant culture of the economically powerful, developed consciously or unconsciously, oppressing the cultures of the poor and the marginalized. Generally interculturality today means the giant global exploitative cultures that are held together in control by the

economically and politically powerful that oppress the cultures of the poor and consign them to a culture of "silence". The cultural value-system advocated by this powerful mechanism with its colonial attitude of admitting only one form of culture suppresses all other particular cultures and dehumanizes and marginalizes the poor. This culture represented by the elite for their self-aggrandizing benefits is an artificial product manufactured through the mass media and the technological and scientific advancement. This culture with its values of competition and profit at any cost causes divisions among people, widens the gap between the affluence and luxury of the rich and the subhuman misery and dehumanizing poverty of the poor, breeds consumerism and over exploitation of Nature, eventually causing collective insecurity to humankind. To be cultured in this culture is to be a consumer, to join the rat-race of competition and acquisition. And to maintain the standard, never mind the means, the price and the people. It is the root-cause of fragmentation and division of societies and cultures. An intercultural situation of this sort is the greatest obstacle to the integral human progress. It brings humankind to the brink of disaster as is evidenced in ecological catastrophe that is threatening humankind.¹

The Need for a Global Ethics for Humankind

Thus standing on the threshold of the third millennium, if humankind wishes to survive on this earth, it has to re-think the various cultural values, tacit ethical norms, embodying the various cultures and societies, and the direction in which they are moving. As Hans Kung has already pointed out, we need a global ethics of Responsibility.² Such an ethics with its transcultural values should constitute the ethos of our world. We need such a global ethics for protecting and fostering our fraternal communion and solidarity.

This is the most urgent need and task of ethics today - the need to construct a macroethics of solidarity and co-responsibility on a global level that will usher in the universal fraternity and communion of all humankind. If such an ethics is to be possible and universally valid, it has to have a rational and transcendental foundation that rises above all cultures. Hence our effort in this article is to search for a rational foundation for a universally valid ethics with a transcultural value-system transvaluing all particular cultural value systems.

1. Cf. George Therukattil, "Towards a Liberative Interculturality" in *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Gregory D'Souza, Bangalore 1996, pp. 217-9
2. Hans Kung, *Global Responsibility : In Search of a New World Ethics*, London, 1996, p. xlii-iv

Are there transcultural values, which should constitute the ethos of any human society worth calling it? Is there a standard to judge the merit and demerit of various culture-dependent values? What is the basis of transcultural values? From where do we get the criterion which is to guide us?

The cultural diversity and the consequent plurality of cultural values resulting in the "cultural shocks" when meeting alien cultures need not lead to a sceptical relativism of cultural values and argue against the moral fabric of transcultural values. There could be a minimal, universal moral standard which is applicable to all human beings irrespective of cultures. Being minimal makes it non-conflicting and non-antagonistic to cultural diversity. This minimal, rational, culture-transcendent standard for transvaluation of cultural values of particular cultures must be the humanum. This is because at the centre of every culture, there is the basic humanum which is the same everywhere and at all times and different cultures are various evolutions of this same humanum. What is implicit here is a minimal recognition of the humanum in every people.³ The only common denominator between the various cultures is this humanum and our respect for it. However if it is to be worthy of humans, it must go beyond 'being human'. For transcultural values must preserve and further the humanity of human beings and human society. "An abyss still yawns between the hominized world and the world which has to be humanized"⁴

Here the distinction Jiang Tianji makes between normal-normative and normal is important. "Normal normative are what distinguishes the cases in which there are no alternative for us to normal practice from the cases in which there are when a practice is constitutive for our form of life; there are no genuine alternative which means that the practice could not be other than it is. Hence it cannot be abandoned or altered. It belongs to what wittgenstein could term "the common behaviour of Mankind" (*Philosophical Investigation*, 206)"⁵ "These practices - governed principles will serve as guidelines for the comparative appraisal of different cultures and to find out which culture or which parts and elements are normal and conventional and hence locally justifiable for the aliens only and which one or which parts and elements are normal and natural and hence globally justifiable for us as well as for aliens."⁶ The minimal and

3. Joel J. Kupperman, "Traditions and Moral Progress" in *Culture and Modernity: East - West Philosophic Perspectives* ed. Eliot Deutsch. (Indian Edition) Delhi. 1994, p. 326

4. Hans Kung, *Op. cit.* p. 41

5. Jiang Tianji, "The Problem of Relativism" in *Culture and Modernity* op. cit, p 170-1

6. *Ibid.* pp. 172-3

basic moral fabric of transcultural values must be based on the humanum, some empirically given basic concerns of the humans.⁷

According to Bimal K. Matilal, comparative ethnographers have shown that there are certain core values unique to each culture which show resilience, resisting change or even possess immutability in the midst of confrontation and interaction with other cultures. "The cultures' ethical system being immanent, such core values are not available for real confrontation or transcultural evaluation."⁸ But it is such core values or moral fabric that holds their members together in all cultures. So we have to reject the sceptical relativism of cultural values at least with regard to these basic transcultural values and moral fabric. Thus on the one hand, we have transcultural values dictated by the common human concern (humanum) and being the necessary fabric of any human society and on the other hand, we have the historically related and environmentally-dependent cultural values which varies from culture to culture. Hindu ethicists distinguish between *Sadharana dharma* and *Visesha dharma*.⁹ The *Sadharana Dharma* being common to all humans, is also called *sanatana dharma*. "This everlasting dharma is inherently transcultural and transtemporal and will cloak itself in as many cultural and religious forms as will receive it"¹⁰

Any talk of the global ethic and transcultural values should then be dialogical and should result in a New culture. Anything human-qua-human belongs to the order of nature, and, as such is somehow beyond culture. Thus the global ethic that we envision should be transcultural and should be based on a humanum that goes beyond human in order to give direction to the authentic progress of the humanum. A transcultural value-system integrates the basic values, ideals and truth of all cultures.

Now the humanum that should be the basis of transcultural values should not be an abstraction or universalization in the Western approach. "When faced with the fact of pluralism and diversity, the West tends to transcend the particularities by projecting a universal that would be common to all... This approach tends towards domination. There is

7. Bimal K. Matilal, "Pluralism, Relativism, and Cultural Interaction" in *Culture and Modernity*, op. cit. p. 151.

8. *Ibid*, p. 152.

9. *Ibid*, p. 154.

10. Raymon Panikkar, "In Christ is Neither Hindu nor Christian: Perspectives on Hindu-Christian Dialogue" in *Religious Issues and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. C. Wei-hsun Fu & G.E. Spiegel, New York, 1989, p. 476

another approach which is liberative, that is the approach that takes care of the context, the universal that is inextricably bound up with the context, it is a universal-in-context".¹¹

The macro-ethics that we envisage will have to be based on universal in the humanum which will respect the uniqueness and peculiarity of the humans which is not an appendage of the humanum, but an essential dimension of the human.

So the humanum that should form the basis of transcultural values should be universal in the sense it should not be inhuman, "bestial" and at the same time enriching the uniqueness of every human. The universal humanum is not to be distilled from the common essence nor achieved by sinking or subsuming the uniqueness of every particular culture but from the specificities and particularities of all cultures. Ethnographers acknowledge that it is by their unique cultures every people become humanized. "Being human is a culturally mediated reality. The culture of any people embodies its vision, values and ideals regarding what is universally human. However, defining what is universally human is certainly not the monopoly of any one particular race, culture or religion."¹²

This brings us to a macro-ethic of global level with sufficient flexibility and tolerant of complexity to provide adequate and clear emphasis both on the deontological conception of values (Kant's) that assures judgements of rights, protection and entitlements which one should recognize others to have regardless of one's relation to them or of what one thinks of them and on the importance and peculiar requirements of personal relationships and contexts (Responsibility - centered ethics). The deontological macro-ethics of Kant has to be tempered by a responsibility-centered perspective. Only such a macro-ethics would promote a sense of community and common responsibility for the common destiny of human beings. Only that would bring unity of cultures and communion of those who are excluded (subaltern cultures).

An ethic of global status like this would have transcultural values like tolerance, respect for life, social justice etc., without which social life would be impossible. Without a minimal consensus on these values, no human society worth living is rationally possible either in smaller or larger scale. Only if such ethical values are cultivated as a perspective and as

11. Felix Wilfred, "The Language of Human Rights An Ethical Esperanto? in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol 56 (April 1992), p.p. 196-198).

12. Ibid. p. 208

a most creative dimension of our consciousness and as the ultimate human phenomenon, can we give rise to a refined, all-embracing humanism. It is the basic human concerns that is the arbiter of transcultural values. It is worth here to remember the Kantian doctrine: "True humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, is always as an end withal and never merely as a means."

Arguing for a meta-ethic with transcultural values does not eliminate contextual interpretations. But given the pluralism or even occasional allowance for contextual interpretation is no argument against having transcultural values based on the humanum as understood above. Even if divergent human concerns may be there, it is possible to have a convergence of all human concerns. This means transcultural values such as those mentioned should override any particular cultural values; If not, the basic humanum would suffer.

A Philosophical Foundation for a Global Ethics

Hans Kung in his book on Global Responsibility¹³, says that philosophy generally finds it difficult to provide the foundation for a Global ethics which is practicable. He quotes Tugendhat: "So we still await a satisfactory grounding of morality of mutual respect"¹⁴ Also virtue-ethicists like Alaisdaire McIntyre (*After Virtue*) dispense with universal norms and have recourse to the Aristotelian doctrine of virtue which is oriented to individual ethics.

But Emmanuel Levinas, the Franco-Jewish philosopher provides a philosophical foundation for a Global Ethics with his ethics of responsibility. He tries to construct a "humanum" that clarifies the fundamental relationality of the humans. He builds his philosophy on ethics on the metaphysical and exorbitant responsibility for the other. He argues that ethics occurs prior to *being* or *essence* and conditions the essence and being. There is a certain priority in the "oughtness" that is operative in existence. His philosophy is built on the centrality of the other and irreducibility of the other who can never be comprehended by a metaphysics or ontology with vast concepts like Hegel's "spirit" or Heidegger's "being". It is not built on a "care" (*Sorge*) for being (Heidegger), but for what is beyond being, the alterity of the other person. Ethical priority occurs as the moral height of the other person over being, essence, identity, principles, in brief, over me. The other's priority is affirmed without

13. Hans Kung, *op. cit.*

14. E. Tugendhat, *Problems der Ethik*, Stuttgart 1984, p. 176

recourse to principles, in the irrecuperable shock of being-for-the other person before being-for-oneself or being-with-the-others or being-in-the-world.

Levinas emphasizes that there is an ethical moment of face-to-face realm prior to the realm of conceptualization. In this realm each of us find ourselves challenged by the sheer otherness of the other person by the simple fact that this other person is not me. The ethical moment begins with the relationship with the alterity of the other in an obligation to respond to the other. And philosophy should begin with the ethical moment of the appeal of the other person and response of the self which comes before the conceptual moment. Here responsibility precedes freedom.¹⁵

The other manifests himself as a given which the "I" cannot overpower and appropriate in his/her noetic and practical totality. I become responsible because of the other's appearance. In the *face* of the other, I discover myself as already "placed-in-solidarity". Responsibility is woven into our person and even precedes our person as subject. The objective meaning of the other as subject is revealed to me as an appeal to existence. The other's face, the fact that he/she looks at me makes me a servant, responsible for the other's existence, his life and behaviour, since the "face" of the other "looks at me as the eye that is in the tomb shall look at Cain".

Levinas has rightly detected a transcendence in the face of the other person. "Imploring eyes may well make it impossible for me to be truly self-absorbed"¹⁶ We are primarily open and therefore ordered to the other person prior to any arche, responsible to him or her before any question of care for ourselves. The otherness of the other person commands respect, which is unconditional. Anything short of this involves treating humans as object or ideas. In this sense ethical disrespect is "murder". The irreducible and ultimate experience of relationship is not in synthesis, but in the face-to-face of humans, in sociality, in its moral signification.

Levinas approaches human life beginning from a tension observed between the individual subject in its spontaneous self-concern and the relation with the other person which that very self-concern seems to resist or even to exclude. This is a phenomenological analysis of the other summoning the subject rather than the psychological process within the

15. R. Burggraeve, "Responsibility Precedes Freedom" in *Personalist Morals* ed. J. Selling, Leuven, 1988, p. 122

16. Jeffrey Bloechal, *Art. cit.* p. 270

subject by which he/she comes to recognize this ethical demand. But even as Levinas thus seems to concede that we do indeed relate first to ourselves, he remains a virulent opponent of any claim for the primacy of the individual person, subject, self¹⁷. "The central claim is well-known: before, during, and after anything which I do for myself, there is this other person, whose presence alone therefore gives such acts a meaning which is ethical.

Egology of the West

Western philosophy concentrates on the self and neglects the other. This type of philosophy denied the face-to-face reality in which all of us interact with the other. Subordination of the other to being is the philosophy today in the West. It is reduction of the other to the same; not relation with the other as such. Ontology which reduced everything into being is this subordination. It is a philosophy of power, egology - and all egoism leads to war. Levinas criticizes the philosophical root of Western philosophy- the Cartesian ego, which he does not deny but tries to lead it through its very own reflective tools to discover a pre-originary ethical truth, an ethically dedicated "core" within itself which he calls the authentic self. It is a human openness to the other person, an unwilling recognition of his/her humanity and even an unrepayable indebtedness to him/her. Our ethical capacity to find ourselves interactive and feeling for others, already being responsible to them as members of the human community is prior to our capacity to think it over and vote for it or against it. Ethics is not merely different from thinking, in which case it would be eventually absorbed by thinking's reduction to impersonalism. It cuts across ontology. It is otherwise than being or beyond being.

Western philosophy takes ontology (study of essences, of that which *is*) as first philosophy (metaphysics) and upon this constructs ethics. Levinas breaks this ontological imperialism which contains violence in the negation of the alterity of the other which leads to exploitation of one's fellowmen. Before language says *is* (grasping of being) there is an ethical relation *to whom* I am communicating. *To be* means "to communicate", "to relate", "to be for the other". In the West, philosophy is a philosophy of existence (being). It is "my" understanding and grasping that becomes the criterion of other's existence. Ego is the criterion of all. It is a philosophy of ontological imperialism, grasping of all beings into oneself, a "totalization". For Levinas, to exist means "to commit". It means to *ex-sit*, "to go out" from the self, "to relate".

17. Jeffrey Bloechal. *art. cit.* p. 261 .

Humanum in the Philosophy of Levinas

For Levinas, the responsibility for the other forms the womb of Humanum. The obligation or responsibility for the other is discovered within the self. Acknowledging the presence of the other and his ethical height and paying heed to the summons of the other, who holds the self accountable develops the authentic self¹⁸. It is response or responsibility which is this authentic relationship. Now, intersubjective relation is non-symmetrical relation. I am responsible for the other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it. It is thus responsibility to the other that is making really an authentic humanum. The responsibility for the other presented by any experience of the other is uncovered via phenomenological disclosure and is pertaining inescapably to every social relationship. It is transcultural and non relativistic in a global ethic.¹⁹ Transcultural value of social justice is based on such humanum. The self that Levinas speaks of is a self that is criticized and challenged by the other. I am essentially related to the other, even before I chose it. I am placed into radical communion and solidarity with other than myself in an impossible way before I assumed myself as a vocation. Self is made for interpersonal relation and communion so that unless he gives himself to the other, he can never develop his authentic humanum. One's authentic humanum lies in one's responsibility and obligation for communion with the other. Human life is good only to the extent that it conforms to a responsibility for the other which is pre-ordained. Thus for Levinas, identity of the self is identified with the responsibility for the other. It is in responsibility, the authentic self is formed. It is an ethical responsibility for what "ought to be" than what "is". Self has to be challenged with radical exteriority of the other encountered in the ethical exigency of social justice for social life. The self is held in responsibility and put in question by the other. "I am my brothers' keeper". For Levinas, being must be understood in being's other. To eliminate the other from my world is to mutilate my own being. Authentic self is self in relation to the other. Responsibility is woven into subjectivity and precedes our subjectivity. So according to Levinas, to be an authentic self means to live as if one were not a being among beings. It is to be otherwise - than - being. Subjectivity of the self is not in being for oneself. It is from the start "being-for-the other."

In the philosophy of Levinas, justice subordinates the liberty of the self. Here obligation subordinates the rights of the self. Thus for Levinas

18. E. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, trans, Alphonso Lingis, The Hague, 1981, p. 75, 113, 140.

19. *Ibid*, p. 147. 150.

liberty is inconceivable apart from justice, since justice demands that the other is allowed to express his or her self as other. The exteriority or alterity of the other becomes the locus of the judgement of the self, as the other affirms his or her right, undetermined by the self. These rights of the other are absolute, since they are grounded in the human persons' very personhood, his true and proper exteriority which is what makes him unique and a person. Thus truth is always in the context of ethics. It is bound up with social relation which is justice. Truth means responsibility / obligation by which the centripetal movement of grasping is halted. The real resistance to the totalitarianism of power is the face of the other who in his otherness will always remain outside the purview of philosophy. True communion or true togetherness is not a togetherness of universalization or synthesis, but a togetherness of face-to-face. Responsibility is responsibility for the other. The ethical relationship makes us escape the "solitude" of being and brings true communion and brotherhood. "To embrace peace and justice truly is to make more than a momentary commitment. One must accept forever the radical responsibility which alone determines the good life".

If the face of the other is issuing its ethical appeals and its summons are heeded, it prepares one for an encounter with the other from *other*. "The face of the other, already recognized in the process of acquiring virtues, when it is manifested in someone in the process of acquiring virtues, when it is manifested in someone beyond one's own community and not necessarily in accord with one's belief-system, immediately establishes a connection, a "primordial discourse". According to Levinas this primordial discourse invites one pursue a further discourse on the plane of reason where, perhaps, a common ground might be found.²¹ "Thus the very docility that is acquired in cultivation of Responsibility to the other disposes one for a dialogue with those from other cultures or life-world settings. "Thus it could be said that the very docility that Thomas Aquinas learned within the Christian tradition disposed him to learn from the pagan Aristotle, to whom he felt responsible and impelled to reply".²²

According to Jurgen Habermas a global ethical theory would emerge only when one culture with its own understanding of the good life, encounters another. "At such a moment one is summoned to enter a discourse in order to give an account of one's definition of the good life and to arrive at justified moral norms that will allow different life-forms and

21. Michael Barber, "Docility, Virtue of Virtues: Levinas and Virtue Ethics" in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, no.2 June 1998, P. 124

22. *Ibid.*

world interpretations to co-exist."²³

Responsibility for the other precludes anyone from relying on one's hardened values and ideologies and from listening to counter-stances. Thus Responsibility and obligation for the other (dharma) forms the basis and framework for endeavouring to construct a global ethics with transcultural values.

Role of Religions in the construction of a Global Ethics

Religions can contribute much to the construction of a global ethics of responsibility as they respond to the ultimate questions of human concerns. It is on the horizon of Religions human beings evaluate values and goals in their lives. At the same time it is in culture that the basic human concerns express themselves. In this sense we can speak of transcultural values animated and inspired by religions. Religions represent an element of transcendence in terms of origins and goals and show another dimension of the authentic humanum. In this sense religions contain a substantial wisdom and revelation present and operative in them for an understanding and significance of authentic humanum. Thus there is a commonality between culture and religion.

The unconditional nature of the "ought" in global ethics cannot come from conditional human beings, as Hans Kung says, but from an unconditional: "the absolute which provides an overarching meaning and which embraces and permeates individual, human nature and indeed the whole of human society. That can only be the ultimate Supreme Reality, which while it cannot be proved rationally, can be accepted in a rational trust - regardless of how it is named, understood and interpreted in the different religions."²⁴

So when constructing a macro-ethics of global responsibility that should bind everyone, we need the support of religions, because the bond that finite human beings make with the Infinite and the ultimate trust they put in the Absolute only can provide authority and firm ground for disciplining ourselves in transcultural values like social justice. Besides only Religions can mobilize us in our consciences for responsibility for others and restrain us in our consciences for responsibility for others and restrain us in our selfish interests and hold in check our power for domination. Religions only provide the strong motive both emotional and

23. *Ibid.*

24. Hans Kung, *Op. Cit.*, p. 53

rational for living out the transcultural values for the sake of humanity. Thus for eg. the transcultural values of Buddhist contentment and lack of envy, Islam's sense of order and spirit of community, Christianity's compassion for the poor and social justice - all provide motive, inspiration and incentive to live out the transcultural values.²⁵ All great religions hold as their fundamental tenets a sense of sacredness of the person, a sense of social justice, a fundamental unity of humankind, a profound hope that love and justice will finally triumph etc.²⁶ Besides, only religions can show convincingly why transcultural values are binding as only the unconditional can impose unconditional obligation and only the Absolute can be absolutely binding. Human concerns might show the need for transcultural values but the orientation and binding force is provided by religions.²⁷

Conclusion

We are living on the threshold of the third millennium in a critical period of human history. Are we to give ourselves and for our progeny a Hobbessian view of life: nasty and brutish. In the face of the "banality" of evil on the global and national level, there is the urgent task for constructing a Global ethic with transcultural values which would remain as a "conscience" of our human fraternity. The reorganization of the societies and interrelationship, where everything will be shared, where integral freedom will no longer be a luxury only for a few but the daily breath, is the task of a global ethic with transcultural values. It is not enough to come to the building of the Human Rights language from the aspect of "attestation" in Ricoeur's language - i.e., to say as a call to cultivate one's own possibility of attaining full selfhood. Attestation is different from "injunction", a word which Levinas uses frequently in his ethical philosophy in which the self is summoned to responsibility by the other in intersubjective relations. The value profiles of UN Declaration of Human Rights failed and remained impotent as to the realization of the goals envisaged vis-a-vis values, because almost all the rich countries who signed it have no responsibility for the majority of the "others" without any of these rights. The value profile of the Indian Constitution remains impotent. It is the positive feature of the Indian constitution that human rights are spelt out in detail. But unfortunately all the rights in which the well-to-do are more interested like the

25. *Ibid.* P. 54

26. In the World Conference of the Religions for Peace in Kyoto in 1970, these tenets were affirmed by all religions.

27. Hans Kung, *Op. cit.* p. 87

freedom of thought, belief and expression and the right to own property find prominent place in the preamble as enforceable Fundamental rights. Strangely matters most crucial to the poor and oppressed of this country, like right to have means of sustenance, basic education and removal of social inequality etc. are placed among non-enforceable Directive Principles of State Policy.

A Global ethic of Responsibility can bring together the various cultures, various ideologies secular, humanistic and religious, for a liberative praxis. Commitment to Human Rights should be based on a vision of the whole of humanity as brother/sisterhood of all and Father/Motherhood of God. It should be based on a vision of "dharma", a duty or obligation that justifies rights. "That means the dignity of the human person is not the source of rights; rather it is the responsibility towards others that seem to define the status and dignity of humans."²⁸

Today the value of justice has to be transformed and transvalued by the transcultural value of social justice. Justice is to be understood primarily as concerned with how society is structured, how wealth, power, rights and responsibility are distributed at every level - national and international. Commutative justice is to be valued in the wider pattern established by social justice for the world as a whole. So the transcultural value of social justice today would demand working towards building a fraternal society. Not doing this actively or remaining neutral is tacit affirmation of the status quo of unjust cultural structures and patterns of today and is therefore injustice.

We need a global ethics of Responsibility that will usher in the birth of a new willingness to dedicate oneself first and above all to the other person, especially in the context of the effects of our collective activities, particularly in view of ecological crisis. Our responsibility to the other goes beyond commutative and distributive justice to social justice with reciprocal obligation between people of one place to another and between different generations.

"Nowadays one can hardly act correctly locally without thinking globally". Only an ethics of Global Responsibility with transcultural values can generate new cultural forms that create an atmosphere of joy,

28. Aloysius Pieris, "Three Inadequacies in the Social Encyclicals" in *Vidyajyothi Journal of Theological Reflection*, Feb. 1993. p. 82.

simplicity, self-confidence and mutual trust and respect and evolve an ethos of a new cosmos, the design of God for humankind. It is in such humanized and transformed cosmos that one will commit to liberty, equality and fraternity and experience "others" as brothers and sisters of one compassionate Father.

Dept of Christianity
University of Mysore
Mysore - 570 006

Book Reviews

Michael Amaladoss S. J., *LIFE IN FREEDOM, LIBERATION THEOLOGIES FROM ASIA*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1997 pp.xvi, 256

The book is a survey of the Asian reflections in the service of the poor and the oppressed. The first part deals with the Minjung (people) theology of Korea and the Theology of Struggle of the Philippines and then describes the Dalit fight against the Caste system, which is seen even among the Christians, the various types of women's movements and the fight to defend the environment.

The second part is a detailed description of the liberation theologies of various religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam and the different cosmic religions. Rather than going to a study of the classical texts it studies contemporary figures like Gandhi, Agnivesh and E. V. Ramaswamy for Hinduism, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa and Thich Nhat Hanh for Buddhism as well as the Buddhist roots of the Sarvodaya movement. Confucianism is dealt with not as a religion but as an ultimate perspective "that guides individual and social human behaviour" (p. 131). "The ideal of life is to be in harmony with the 'Way' things are and ought to be...The 'Way' offers the basis for prophetic and liberative action" (p. 133). Among Christian theologians Aloysius Pieris, George Soares Prabhu, Sebastian Kappen and M. M. Thomas are discussed. One may wonder why the famous Tissa Balasurya and his group of theologians are left out.

Among Islamic theologians are Ali Shariati from Iran, Mawlana Mawdudi from Pakistan, and Ashgar Ali Engineer from India. Among the cosmic religions generally branded as 'animism' are included shamanistic practices in Korea, 'pasyon' in the Philippines and the worship of Pottan among the Pulayas of Kerala. This cosmic religiosity tends to be the same everywhere having certain common characteristics like a this-worldly spirituality, total dependence on God crying to God for justice, and a non-secular cosmic vision.

Amaladoss's attempt to correct the general impression that Asian liberation theology is only a pale imitation of the Latin American model is very laudable and timely. Some Asian "theologians of other religions like Gandhi in India and Buddha-dasa in Thailand have theologized and written about liberation themes much before the development of liberation theology in Christian circles" (p. xiv). Similarly he feels "that the term liberation is really inadequate to describe the goal that the various Asian thinkers and people are pursuing...Life could serve as a common symbol for all" (p.222). Hence the title of the book is "Life in Freedom". Besides, it is not merely liberation theology "of" Asia, but "from" Asia as the sub-title states, because it is relevant not only for Asians but for all.

The general conclusion is "that all religions have their liberative aspects and prophets who seek to highlight the liberative elements in reinterpreting their religious tradition in a creative and relevant way" (p.200). Between the extremes of claiming autonomy for economic and political spheres free from all religion, and the confessional states that link their socio-economic projects to a particular religion, there are those who separate state and religion and are guided by non-denominational principles, and also those who are positive to all religions, without allying themselves to any. The author's own position seems to be "that the various religious traditions agree around a vision of society and a system of values that should guide lives and actions in this world here and now" while each one is rooted in and develops and reinterprets his own religious tradition (pp. 203-204).

But it is not clear why he insists: "But I can only reflect as a Christian, rooted in my own religious tradition, without claiming to evolve an inter-religious or universal theology. This is the only way I can be true to my own identity and roots and at the same time respect the other believer as other". This goes against the basic principles of inter-religious dialogue. No religion claims that the truths it upholds [are valid only for its own followers. Each one of them is discussing the existential issues that affect all human beings. Their diversity comes mostly from the particular problem each of them is concentrating on and the particular philosophical approach each has assumed. To lock oneself in one's own tradition as the only one in which

one can be at home or to argue that only an initiate of a tradition can really understand it, is to deny the possibility of all dialogue. If Fr. Amaladoss wants to reflect as a Christian he cannot forget the basic Christian view that all religions are integral to the one religious history of humanity and that they all belong to the one divine economy of salvation for all human beings. So it is not clear how he can stop at the praxis level of a common vision of society and a system of values. The world vision that motivates these values are more important than the carrying out of some beneficial projects. The scope of inter-religious dialogue is to devise strategies to make different traditions aware of the basic issues they may have neglected as well as the philosophical aspects which they may not have taken seriously into consideration. For example the Hindu emphasis on the ideal of *lokasam-graha* and the Buddhist *sarvodaya* are liberative social visions. But if one holds that the bad plight of the poor is just the result of their karma, or improving the material conditions of people is just prolonging the bondage of worldly existence, there may not be much enthusiasm in working for liberation. In inter-religious relationship no one's faith can be taken for granted as "his" faith and "his" tradition. It is the same divine gift of faith freely given to all God's children that all religions are trying to interpret and apply to life.

The book is an example of an inter-religious approach to basic issues. It highlights the prophetic stream in every religion and shows the need for them to get out of their historical isolation from each other, step into each other's shoes and face problems together.

Joseph Mattam and Sebastian Kim, *DIMENSIONS OF MISSION IN INDIA*, ed., Bandra, Bombay: St. Paul's 1995, pp. 26

The book is a collection of papers presented at the third annual meeting of FOIM (Fellowship of Indian Missiologists) held at Whitefield, Bangalore, August 26-28, 1994. The eleven papers presented in the book approach the problem of evangelization from different angles. The first paper understandably examines the evolution of mission terminology in recent times especially in the documents of Vatican II and the Papal statements. Jacob Kavumkal suggests as the main scope of Mission the raising up of ecclesial communities to serve the cause of the Kingdom of

God. Metropolitan Mar Osthathios reaffirms against the modern Western trends of theocentrism, the centrality of Jesus Christ in the specifically Christian work of evangelization. Joseph Velankunnel speaks from the point of view of Liberation Theology and defines Mission as the presence of Christ in human struggles for social justice. Joy Thomas, director of Iswani Kendra, places the emphasis of Mission in dialogue, which is the "cry of suffering coloured by an experience of God leading in history" the partners coming from different religious traditions. J. Patmury makes ecology another focus of discussion. "God is the source of all creation and hence all creatures share in a common relationship" (p 131).

Shedding the 'foreign' garb of the missionary and inculturating the whole process of evangelization is surely a theme of importance for the Indian context. This is discussed by Prasad Pinto OFM Cap. provincial superior of Varanasi. Culture as a learned design for living should go beyond external symbols into deeper realities of life embracing the basic assumptions, values drives and motives of a group. According to G. Patmury of UTC, Bangalore, healing should be an important element of Christian mission. The two last chapters deal with the practical problems of communication and ministry as central functions of evangelization.

A negative note in the whole discussion is introduced by J. Rosario Narchison, who places the whole blame for the ills of Indian missionary enterprise on Western expansionism. Anybody who has studied the history of the disappearance from India in the Middle Ages, of Buddhism, which was the religion of India for more than a millennium, should know that expansionism is not anything exclusively of the West. How can anyone argue that fundamentalism is the child of the Enlightenment especially since the emphasis on non-negotiable fundamentals of religion started in America in the 18th and 19th centuries particularly in reaction to the rationalist trend of the Enlightenment? Has not this indiscriminate bashing of the West for all the ills of India already become a stale joke? Each case has to be examined in its own merits and the proper reasons found. For example scholars of comparative religion like Wilfred Cantwell Smith argue that fundamentalism and militancy have deeper roots in the struggle for survival of religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam born under the domination of foreign cultures, as secret philosophies to be imposed on all, and their reliance on a sacred book! When someone presents the missionary work in the North of Roman Catholic Christians from South India as a "typical" example of colonization (p.43), we have to question the soundness of the scholarship behind such sweeping assertions and register a strong protest. Since each paper stands on its own authority, the book has the merit of a convergent divergence of independent view points.

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